ABSTRACT

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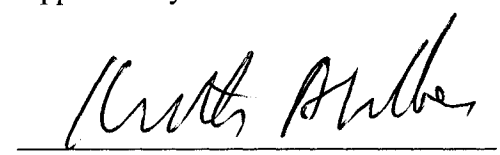

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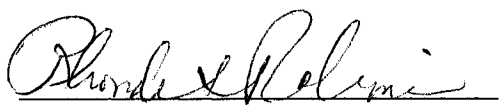

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the efficacy of using metaphor in instructional training sessions as a way of tapping into participants' perceptions of an organization's existing cultural climate. Specifically, this study describes how two training sessions (one for managerial and one for nonmanagerial personnel) conducted at a Fortune 100 healthcare corporation used metaphor-based activities to help participants express verbally and pictorially (through their drawings) their conceptions of the organization and its leadership.

The study concentrates on inductive qualitative methods, including content analysis and semiotic analysis, as a multimethodological approach to studying meaning. The qualitative, rapid ethnographic approach was used to study the signs in texts to articulate the meaning of leadership within a given context. In this study, the goal was to look for the descriptions of meaning presented by the participants, particularly the meanings that are often taken for granted or that are used to explain others' understandings. In order to depict the meaning of *leadership,* content and semiotic techniques were used for studying the sign systems used in a training activity and for studying how the participants interpreted their meaning and engaged in sense-making.

Although much of the findings of the two groups were similar, there were some differences in their perceptions of the organization and its leadership, differences that seem attributable to the makeup of the two groups. The study provides the results of the two groups' perceptions and meanings as they relate to leadership. The study concludes by uncovering their shared meanings and suggests how these meanings can be used to lay the groundwork for loftier initiatives such as large-scale organizational change efforts and leadership development.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

USING METAPHOR IN DESIGNING TRAINING ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT LARGE-SCALE ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE EFFORTS: A CASE STUDY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the efficacy of using metaphor in instructional training sessions as a way of tapping into participants' perceptions of an organization's existing cultural climate. Specifically, this study describes how two training sessions (one for managerial and one for nonmanagerial personnel) conducted at a Fortune 100 healthcare corporation used metaphor-based activities to help participants verbally and pictorially (through their drawings) express their conceptions of the organization and its leadership. By uncovering their shared meanings, the study suggests how these meanings can be used to lay the groundwork for loftier initiatives such as large-scale organizational change (LSOC) efforts and leadership development.

My interest in conducting this research was prompted by (a) my educational background and professional experience in instructional design (ID); (b) my speculation concerning the enhanced role that ID and instructional technology (IT) professionals can play in organizational change efforts; and (c) as part of those efforts, my wish to explore how visuals, and especially metaphors, can be used to elicit employees' understanding of their own and others' beliefs and attitudes about their organization and its leadership.

This chapter explains these impetuses for my research, describes the theoretic framework for my study, presents an overview of the study, and previews the remaining chapters.

Impetuses for the Study

Education and Experience

As an instructional designer by both educational background and professional experience, I am interested in visual communication, training, and organizational development. My undergraduate educational background in visual communications technology, visual arts, and visual media used to communicate with and educate adults helped prepare me for many positions in which I created corporate communication, medical education, and training programs using visual communications technology, multimedia technology, and instructional and visual design. My graduate studies in ID technology deepened my understanding of the role of ID and IT professionals in implementing training in Fortune 500 companies, including Internet-based training practices, and paved the way for positions at the U.S. Naval Training Center and in corporations, where I developed multimedia and classroom training programs. As my education and experience grew, I became increasingly interested in the relationship between my field and organizational change, organizational behavior, semiotics, implementation, and shared meaning.

Role of ID and IT Professionals

In my current position at a major healthcare corporation (herein called HealthCare), these interests converged as I became more aware of the potential uses of metaphor in ID and IT training programs designed to discover the participants' understanding of their organizational culture and its leadership. Specifically, I began to speculate that ID and IT professionals might play a more crucial, proactive role in helping managerial and nonmanagerial personnel come to an awareness of how they view their organization and their roles within it.

Traditionally, training programs designed and implemented by ID and IT professionals have usually focused more on information dissemination, development of skills, or changes in behavior and attitudes. In other words, programs were based on previously identified needs, and in which the trainer was viewed as the provider of the key information or skills, and the participants were viewed as the receivers. Valuable as such training is, I wondered whether HRD, ID, IT, and human performance technology (HPT) professionals might also become more instrumental in designing programs in which the participants provided the information and ideas and the trainer served more as a facilitator to help participants generate the data others need to help plan, implement, and sustain organizational change efforts.

Such a paradigm would reverse the typical dynamic, for here, instead, the participants would be the providers and the trainers–or, rather, the leadership of the organization–the receivers. Although such an inductive or discovery approach to training is not new, the information and data gleaned from such training is often not

used to lay the groundwork necessary for shaping an organization's LSOC initiatives and neither is that data used to frame, create, and sustain communications within the organization (Arnold, 1996) that clearly, consistently, and coherently support LSOC efforts at all levels. This tieback to the concepts and images derived through training sessions is often the missing link to effective LSOC efforts. And without this link, the organization may create mixed messages and confusion about leadership's direction and the organization's goals at large.

Metaphor Use in Training

Indeed, at the time I designed this study, such a situation existed at HealthCare, where I was (and am currently) employed, and it was this sense of dissonance that ultimately prompted me to pursue my research. Briefly, for the past three years, HealthCare has had a training program in which about 1,300 managers participate worldwide. The program focuses on the concept of leadership, and it introduces the stream metaphor by showing a video segment from the well-known Ken Blanchard Company. The video illustrates how managers can use the leadership styles of Situational Leadership® II (SLII®) to provide employees with the focus and attention they need during times of change. Following the video, the training session turns to questions, flipchart drawing exercises, and group presentations–all flowing from the stream metaphor–to help participants conceptualize and articulate their impressions of what leadership currently looks like at HealthCare.

The guiding stream metaphor provides a usable framework for the participants to articulate their meanings of leadership, with the aim of helping them create shared meaning. However, as has been my observation at HealthCare and other corporations, most of the time the data generated from these training sessions–that is, the meaning creations–are often overlooked or not integrated into other training courses, meetings, or otherwise reused in creating cross-cultural and cross-context understandings and communications.

Research Goals

By observing two of these training sessions at HealthCare–one consisting of managers and the other of nonmanagers–I set two goals for my research agenda: (1) primarily, to investigate the efficacy of using metaphor (in this case, the stream metaphor) as a way to elicit and share perceptions about the organization and its leadership, and (2) secondarily, to consider how the data generated from such sessions might be used to further support LSOC efforts within an organization. Later, in Chapter 3, I describe my study in more detail. For now, however, it is important to introduce some of the premises and theoretic concepts that helped frame my research namely, leadership, metaphor, shared meaning, and training–for it is at the intersection of these that my study lies.

Theoretic Framework

Leadership

Perhaps the most ubiquitous terms used in present-day literature are *leadership*, *organizational change*, and *organizational development*. A common buzzword in the titles of numerous books is *leadership*. Furthermore, leadership is a popular service in the training world, where managerial consultants offer countless courses on becoming an effective leader. Yet, despite all the attention leadership receives, it remains for many an abstract concept–difficult for employees to articulate in any concrete way and even harder to put into practice (Schein, 1992).

Bolman and Deal (2003) concur that there seems to be a misunderstanding or inability to articulate what leadership means or what it looks like in organizations. They further point out that "around the world, middle managers say their enterprise would thrive if only senior management showed 'real leadership'" (p. 336). Gardner (1986) echoes this idea:

> Leadership is a word that has risen above normal workday usage as a conveyor of meaning and has become a kind of incantation. We feel if we repeat it often enough with sufficient ardor, we shall ease our sense of having lost our way, our sense of things unaccomplished, of duties unfulfilled. (p. 1)

On this, most scholars, practitioners, and leaders would agree: without knowing the meaning of leadership, we can neither communicate and impart the concept nor develop symbol and sign systems that promote, excite, or elicit the behaviors required for LSOC leadership initiatives. Thus, there is this main challenge: if, as Bolman and Deal explain, leadership is "not a tangible thing. It exists only in relationships and in

the imagination and perception of the engaged parties" (p. 337), then how can we extract from imagination and perception the concepts of leadership that are so difficult to articulate? One approach is to use metaphor as a vehicle for expressing what is otherwise amorphous.

Metaphor

As society becomes more visually oriented, images take on a significant role in motivating actions, influencing opinions, and conveying meaning (Helms & Stern, 2001). Metaphors are windows into understanding what may not be obvious or easily articulated. They work because, when elicited spontaneously, they can reveal an individual's subconscious impressions, beliefs, and attitudes–how that individual perceives reality. Symbols and metaphors can effectively serve as primers for cognitive and behavioral change (Armenakis, Fredenberger, Giles, & Cherones, 1996). For this reason, in organizations, metaphors and visuals can reveal and create shared meaning across contexts and job levels.

As revealed in this study, using a metaphor in training sessions evokes a readily available amount of words and images common enough to set a framework for what people otherwise try to express in an abstract way. Furthermore, metaphors are especially effective in helping pinpoint issues without pointing fingers at one project, group, or individual. Thus, they provide a safe environment in which to discuss organizational problems in an oblique way without the fear of criticism or retaliation, which might arise if the topic being discussed is explicitly the organization, its leaders,

and its culture. For example, in this study, talking about water and its rocks and logjams invited honesty, and even much humor, by providing a benign and familiar metaphoric topic: a stream. Finally, metaphor use can influence change because metaphors evoke higher-order feelings of mutual understanding and community within organizational constituents, and this mutual understanding leads more easily and directly to organizational transformation (Illes & Ritchie, 1999).

In their seminal work on metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) maintain that using metaphors and imagery helps to highlight abstract concepts, ideas, and beliefs so that information is shared and used to align organizational perceptions, knowledge, and meaning. Furthermore, metaphors and the associated visual imagery and language they invoke can be used collectively to create a vision of the organization both as it currently exists and as it might exist in the future. When a common metaphor, such as the stream metaphor used in this study, is implanted in an organization's management training, the metaphoric concepts, images, and words help systematize shared meaning and adoption of change. Part of this is accomplished through branding in other training programs, organizational meetings, or LSOC initiatives.

Communication and training that support LSOC initiatives require the use of branding when developing the sign and symbol systems. Organizational signs and symbols have long been viewed as a means to create and maintain meaning in organizations (Pondy, Frost, Morgan, & Dandridge, 1983). The term *symbol* includes any "thing" (an event, object, relationship, etc.) that conveys meaning. According to Peirce (cited in Houser & Kloesel, 1992), "every concept and every thought beyond

immediate perception is a sign" (p. xxx). Peirce defines a *sign* as "anything which is so determined by something else, called its *object*, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its *interpretant*, that the latter is thereby mediately determined by the former" (p. xxx). The signs and symbols used in training or communication programs are used to remind, excite, and/or elicit behaviors that the company wants to change or promote. Thus, to integrate the desired LSOC sign systems, instructional designers and technologists should have an understanding of the mental maps employees already have that cause them to behave a certain way. Furthermore, by understanding the participants' preconceived perceptions, facilitators may help to contribute not only to learning beyond a classroom but also to organizational learning itself and thereby help focus transformation and ultimately organizational change (Schein, 1992). All of these benefits, however, depend on a community in concert, which brings us to the concept of shared meaning.

Shared Meaning

Arnold, Kozinets, and Handelman (2001) state that interpretation is socially constructed, that is, that things (e.g., signs, images, words) accrue meaning by virtue of group assent. Accordingly, the concept or meaning of *leadership* is created by a particular group and is based upon the groups' shared meaning. Sometimes their shared meaning may reflect their perspective or position in the company. Once the meaning is shaped and the group initiates a visual and textual component to communicate the concept, the creators design it based on their own shared

interpretations. The problem, however, is that although these activities may take place in a meeting or a classroom, they often do not extend to the larger organization, which also needs to adopt the same meaning.

Organizationally, it may be logistically difficult to create activities to establish shared meaning across all contexts and job levels. However, if it can be confirmed whether or not shared meaning and understanding exist, then LSOC campaigns may be better supported. For example, in a Duimering and Safayeni (1998) study, employees were trained on team concepts so that they could implement a "team program" in the organization. From the beginning, widespread confusion existed among organizational members about the meaning of *team* and about the kinds of actions that might be appropriate within the context of a team program. To avoid misunderstanding of the term and concept, images were constructed and maintained to help institute the shared meaning of *team* within the context of the organization. Unfortunately, most of the time, meaning creations such as these are often overlooked, not conducted in training courses and meetings, or otherwise not reused in creating cross-cultural and cross-context understandings.

Botan and Soto (1998) address this challenge by proposing that perceptions, signs, and symbols used to implement LSOC efforts should facilitate shared meaning and thus create a more universal, organization-wide understanding of leadership. They suggest that meaning depends on the act of interpretation as conducted by a particular person in a given moment within a given context. For this reason, it is important to establish meaning in a context so that shared meaning may occur. On the

other hand, if communication campaigns are created outside of the context in which they are applied, shared meaning and adoption of the concepts may not take root.

Helms and Stern (2001) explain that employees' hierarchical levels within the organization are likely to affect their perceptions about an organization's culture. They say that employees' training, their interaction with top management, and the amount of information to which they are exposed all help to shape their perceptions of their organization. If employees at various levels of an organization or from various subcultures perceive the organization differently, then these perceptions may impact the organization's ability to create and implement LSOC initiatives such as a company-wide leadership or corporate values campaign. The results of Helms and Stern's study demonstrate how difficult it is to homogenize cultural perceptions in organizations, and the authors urge managers to realize that suborganizational cultures or groups likely exist within their organizations. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important to examine whether or not perceptions and interpretations are truly the same or different or only appear that way on the surface.

Shared meaning is necessary for all communications and especially for LSOC initiatives. Creating the simplest communications both visually and verbally is at the heart of moving an organization in a certain direction. Developing common understanding both verbally and visually connects various groups in an organization and its subcultures. Although different groups have different organizational cultures, they can all share meaning–assuming the groups agree on the meanings of the symbols and images used to represent concepts (O'Hara-Devereaux & Pardini, 1993).

Furthermore, according to Duimering and Safayeni (1998), people within organizations also use images as a means of communicating with customers and employees. But again, unless the organization has developed activities to help create shared meaning together, such efforts to extend images beyond the organization and to its customers may fail. Schein (1992) states that until a group has shared meaning, it has no shared basis for determining what is real.

Finally, metaphor-use facilitates the creation of shared meaning because views are shared in an impersonal, objective manner without raising volatile work issues and engaging in the kind of defensiveness, scapegoating, and "turf wars" that can erupt in company meetings when issues are approached head on. Instead, the metaphor-based training activities create a neutral, comfortable, and nonjudgmental climate for the participants and the facilitator to understand their perspectives on how the organization works (or does not work)–for example, its structure, employees, resources, challenges, and satisfactions or, in other words, its culture (Kearney & Hyle, 2004). By comparing their impressions, the participants–in this study, managerial and nonmanagerial personnel–engage in making meaning and can see in which areas they agree or disagree. As an instructional designer, I was most interested in this research project, particularly in the participants' discovery and sense-making process as revealed by metaphor.

Therefore, a definition I arrive at in this study is streaming metaphor and is to be used as a means to create shared meaning. Metaphors serve as a good tool for meaning making, for underlying them are culturally shared concepts that provide the

basis for communication. The purpose of the streaming metaphor meaning-making activity was to use a metaphor to trigger "aha" moments among the participants. The "aha" realizations were triggered by the images and icons they drew and their explanations of them during which they negotiated their meanings. An important conclusion of this study, then, is that it confirms the importance of using streaming metaphor in the meaning-making process because it surfaces employees' true perceptions of organizational realities versus idealisms. The streaming metaphor reveals how metaphor can be used in meaning-making activities such as the one described in this study. The ways that streaming metaphor can be used for future studies are elaborated in Chapter 5.

Training

Leaders, as well as others, often find it difficult to explain what an organization looks like or what it is going to look like to help manage LSOC initiatives. In fact, many leaders often display visuals of milestones of business objectives and of key must-wins, such as market profitability or regulatory compliance. However, when key changes disrupt the movement of work through an organization, either deliberately or not, leaders must react, respond, and then prepare their organization for the change. To prepare an organization for change, leaders may turn to human resource development (HRD), organization development (OD), or IT practitioners to support the change initiatives.

Although many different types of interventions may be designed and implemented, for the purposes of this study, the focus is on the intervention of communication–specifically, the design and implementation of metaphor-based training. Ideally, the data derived from such sessions is then integrated into the organization's top-down or bottom-up communication messages, signs, and symbols in order to provide continuity and clarity between training and LSOC efforts. Although this tie-back is the ultimate goal of such training and although recommendations for doing so are addressed in Chapter 5, the study reported here examines only the former: the efficacy of using metaphor as a vehicle for discovering managerial and nonmanagerial perceptions of their organization and leadership and the extent to which their perceptions agree or disagree.

Training programs are one of the ways through which business management teams can communicate a change initiative, such as increasing quality, becoming more customer-focused, or refining what it means to be a leader in their organization. For instance, incorporating a leadership message requires the instructional technologist to consider how to elicit shared meaning and understanding within a learning context and even beyond the training room context. One of the main suggestions of this research is that employees who are assisted with building shared meaning and a shared mental framework may be more successful in applying organizational changes in their own context. If instructional designers and technologists are able to connect metaphor use with the meaning of leadership, then communications, policies, and organizational change management efforts may be better aligned.

Learning and development activities can be designed to discover employees' perceptions, attitudes, norms, and typical behaviors. For example, in a leadership development training program, participants who are oriented to leadership positions may be asked to partake in development activities designed to engage thought, dialogue, and reflection on leadership or leadership styles. Instructional technologists who design the course create these activities to help leaders engage in thinking about and describing what leadership "looks like." Some activities may be highly participatory, including writing, drawing, presenting, or role-playing.

Although such activities and programs may already be common in organizations, what is uncommon are the ways IT or HRD professionals leverage existing data from these programs in an effort to support LSOC efforts. Being aware of this long-range goal, ID professionals should design training sessions aimed at improving organizational performance and leadership; however, such efforts are likely to be fruitless unless they and the participants are aware of the organizational culture as it currently exists. Hence, the need to find ways of unearthing these shared and unshared perceptions of organizational leadership and their effect upon the culture is imperative for the support of LSOC initiatives.

In addition to viewing training in the broadest context, shared meaning and shared mental frameworks must be also be built or supported so that employees are able to apply business changes in their own contexts. When implementing LSOC initiatives, training and HRD departments may provide opportunities to embed the change message into their programs. Instructional technologists who develop

organizational training and development programs work with organizational development specialists, HRD professionals, communication specialists, and business management teams on the integration strategy. LSOC integration alongside training programs is advantageous, as training program audiences are made up of cross-functional groups representing most areas of an organization (e.g., finance, manufacturing, operations, quality, and executive leadership). But training programs are only one of many interventions that LSOC initiatives may incorporate into the change strategy. Business management teams also turn to communication and marketing departments for LSOC support. These departments may be requested to design or complement internal communication websites, e-mails, posters, training programs, and presentations to help facilitate and communicate the desired change message.

To avoid misunderstandings, instructional technologists can train managers with leadership skills and abilities to create a vision, share that vision, and use the vision to move an organization forward, thus influencing the desired behavior. However, before attempting such interventions, facilitators or change interventionists need to understand the culture and how employees work together in establishing a shared mental framework and how incorporating visuals may assist a team in building a shared vision. O'Hara-Devereaux and Pardini (1993) state that combining a group's intelligence into one vision that is agreed to by individuals at the team or group level is more easily and efficiently accomplished by using graphic tools. Graphic tools can be used to facilitate a shared comprehension of concepts across the entire company,

thus reducing misconceptions and misapplications of the concept under review. In addition, graphic tools assist with the communication of what leadership is and what behavior employees and managers need to demonstrate as leaders.

On the other hand, what if these activities are already happening, but instructional technologists, HRD professionals, and communication specialists are failing to capture the data from such activities? If these specialists are expected to help support LSOC initiatives, they need to recognize the learning activities that are presently occurring within their organizations and to capture these data. The data can then be used to reshape, recycle, reinforce, and reinstitutionalize the desired change back into the organization in an effort to support LSOC leadership initiatives.

Instructional technologists who are able to extend the training solutions they design into organizational change interventions are able to better link content and meaning within training and development courses to the critical business needs. Instructional technologists who design courses that assist and capture meaning and who then reincorporate their findings into the organization move their skill set toward the design and development of more robust learning interventions. Seels and Richey (1994) contend that there is "growing support for the constructivist position, resulting in an emphasis on learner experience, learner control, and learner definitions of meaning and reality" (p. 34). The trend is toward "contextualization of content" and learning as a "search for meaning" in a situated or anchored learning environment (Bruner, 1966). In other words, understanding of the LSOC messages used to transfer the meaning of those messages must be socially constructed. Instructional

technologists, HRD professionals, and organizational development practitioners "require a more fully worked-out view of the social world" in order to design and help facilitate the cultural changes (Tessmer & Harris, 1992, p. 54). If instructional technologists research and explore how internal values and meaning are used in organizational change initiatives, they may be able to better support individual or cultural mental maps in classroom activities, thus preparing managers and additional participants to extend their learning into their clients' organizations. These are indeed ambitious, challenging, and important goals.

Overview of the Study

This study presents the beginning of such a challenge. It is important to note that the aim of this research project is not to assess organizational culture, propose change initiatives, or intervene in the training sessions in any way. Rather, it is to examine the efficacy of using metaphor in instructional training sessions as a way of tapping into how the participants perceived the organization's existing cultural climate. This was done by collecting the shared meanings of leadership currently held by two groups at HealthCare: one group of 11 managerial personnel and another group of 9 nonmanagerial personnel, each participating in the same type of training session. The study examines how, through the use of metaphor-based activities, the participants and trainers discovered the current climate within the organization. It further suggests how the findings from this study may help create a sound basis for creating and implementing change initiatives.

Research Questions

Essentially, the main research question guiding this study was this: What can we find out about an organization's meaning of leadership when asking middle-managerial and nonmanagerial participants to describe leadership in their organization? Underlying this broad question were four subquestions:

Subquestion 1: What are the middle-manager participants' and other nonmanagerial participants' meanings of leadership?

Subquestion 2: What meanings do these participants assign to leadership-related images during the shared meaning stream activity?

Subquestion 3: How do the meanings they create relate to the organizationally acceptable meanings?

Subquestion 4: What are the implications for IT professionals designing large-scale organizational change initiatives and communications?

Significance of the Research

This study is significant and may contribute to and expand the theoretical constructs within which it is situated for five reasons.

First, organizations need to become increasingly adept at knowing how employees interpret, adopt, and eventually change within their own environments. As Pondy et al. (1983) state, "Very little attention is paid to the congruence of various types of symbols within one manager's span of control or in connection with other parts of the organization" (p. 76). Cultural attention on leadership focuses on the

symbolism inherent in managerial action, which amounts to focusing on how followers and others perceive leaders' behaviors (Trice & Beyer, 1984). Therefore, a deeper study into the sign and symbol systems used to articulate meaning may contribute to leader behaviors, behavior change initiatives, and ultimately cultural change.

Second, currently, no research exists that has directly addressed the internal processes of organizational communication involved in the construction and maintenance of sign and symbol systems (Duimering & Safayeni, 1998). Additionally, people of various cultures are interacting more often and in more complex ways, and organizational communication must be re-examined (O'Hara-Devereaux & Pardini, 1993). O'Hara-Devereaux and Pardini also state that taking the opportunity to select, develop, and sequence visual images and combine them into LSOC initiatives can support overall organizational understanding. Visual images can keep people working within the same big picture and mental model. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of visuals created in leadership training programs may lead IT and HRD professionals to understand the meaning of leadership. These sign and symbol systems may be used to make inferences about the culture across context and job levels. Findings can be used as recommendations to LSOC communication campaigns in efforts to communicate the cultural meanings more widely.

Third, this study of shared meaning and what the meaning of leadership means to a particular group can help IT and HRD professionals examine and understand the shared meaning of leadership (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). In attempts to describe

culture, a rapid, applied ethnographic approach, such as the one used in this study, is appropriate (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Bogdan and Biklen contend that "there is interaction between culture and the meanings people attribute to events" (p. 28), and they also state that the researcher's goal is to share in the meanings that the cultural participants take for granted. Semiotic analysis is an appropriate approach to understanding the phenomenon of shared meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Wax, 1971).

Fourth, the study demonstrates that data can be collected, analyzed, and filtered back into the organization and its findings can contribute to the literature on organizational change, metaphors, and semiotics (meaning). The audiences the study can support are instructional designers; instructional technologists; organizational designers; HPT practitioners; communication specialists; and management, learning and development leaders. This study can help provide them with an approach for collecting and analyzing data that may already exist within their own organizations.

Fifth, the data and findings from this study can be used to make recommendations for helping HealthCare refine current and future leadership perceptions and for implementing change. This study can influence organizations to look more deeply at how people perceive and use metaphors to create meaning and construct meaning prior to creating LSOC communication campaigns. Also, this study can provide managers with a means for reflecting upon their own perceptions of leadership and help them determine what leadership means, what they might do to change perceptions with their own behavior modifications, and how they can better

communicate and behave with employees at different job levels and in different contexts.

Assumptions

As the researcher, I assumed that managers and additional participants provide honest and accurate explanations at the moment the observation takes place.

Summary

This chapter established that analyzing the shared meaning of leadership perceptions and learning from those meanings can help support future LSOC initiatives. There is an increasing need to align the meaning-making of leadership with organizational culture behaviors in efforts to implement, elicit, excite, and remind organization members of behaviors required for change. Essentially, this chapter proposes that "culture and leadership, when one examines them closely, are two sides of the same coin" (Schein, 1985, p. 2). If IT and HRD practitioners understand how middle managers and others make meaning of leadership in their organizations, then the meanings will inform instructional technologists and HRD practitioners more about the culture in which they work. And if IT and HRD practitioners know more about the organizational culture and the shared meaning of leadership perceptions and their relevance within the culture, they will be better prepared to reshape behaviors by designing other training and organizational interventions.

Chapter 2 supports the theoretical constructs highlighted in this chapter. It provides an understanding of four theoretical constructs that support researchable areas in change, culture, semiotics, and metaphor.

Chapter 3 presents the method utilized to address this study's main research question and its subquestions. This chapter concentrates on inductive qualitative methods, including content analysis and semiotic analysis, as a methodological approach to studying meaning.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of my analyses of each group's images and the ways they interpreted them, as well as the theoretic interrelationship between signs and their meaning.

Chapter 5 uses the findings to draw conclusions about the differences found between the middle-managerial participants' (Group A) and the nonmanagerial participants' (Group B) concepts of their organization and its leadership. It also draws conclusions about the efficacy of using metaphor-based activities in other organizations and concludes with some implications that this study may have for both practitioners and researchers.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter explains and demonstrates connections among various bodies of literature, including the four theoretical constructs introduced in Chapter 1: change, culture, semiotics, and metaphor. These concepts underlie the present study of how signs and symbol systems used in communication and/or training can help create shared meaning essential for supporting LSOC initiatives.

However, none of the research literature that I found identified each of the four theoretical constructs together to support the efficacy of using metaphor in instructional training sessions as a way of tapping into participants' perceptions of an organization's existing cultural climate. Also, of the theories identified and brought together, none of them address each other's disconnects and connections. Therefore, this chapter and the outcomes of this study help to alleviate the lack of research literature in this manner. In this chapter, I demonstrate the expansion of the research literature by showing the relationships between each of the theoretical constructs. Although the literature relating to each of these four constructs is quite extensive, the following discussion focuses on only those studies most relevant to the research questions presented in the previous chapter.

Organizational Change

According to Cummings and Worley (2001), change–both planned and unplanned–is inevitable in organizations. In the case of the present study, the topic of organizational change, especially as it relates to designing and developing LSOC initiatives aimed at planned change, is critical for instructional technologists, HRD professionals, and organizational development and/or performance technologists. As discussed in this section, these are typically the people most extensively involved in the design and development of communication and adoption interventions of organizational change initiatives.

Change requires the adoption of ideas, which depends on the acceptance of individual and performance solutions and adequate implementation or utilization strategies. As Seels and Richey (1994) state, "utilization depends on the promotion of awareness, trial, and adoption of innovations" (p. 44). They contend that "the literature on organizational development is helpful in understanding implementation and institutionalization" (p. 45) and that "little design literature addresses the implementation process" (p. 44).

Innovation Decision Process

A theoretic foundation for implementation is provided by Rogers's (2003) change management theory, which accounts for how diffusion of innovation occurs. Rogers's model explains the factors influencing the adoption of innovations

(otherwise known as management ideas and concepts) such as "quality," "leadership," or "values," depicting it as a process.

> The innovation-decision process is the process through which an individual (or other decision-making unit) passes from gaining initial knowledge of an innovation [–persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation–] to forming an attitude toward the innovation, to making a decision to adopt or reject, to implementation of the new idea, and to confirmation of this decision. (p. 168)

Rogers's (2003) research represents an integrated body of concepts and generalizations collected from several case investigations conducted by researchers in several scientific disciplines. Diffusion research is a particular type of communication research, although it began outside the academic field of communications. The diffusion research approach has been taken up by a variety of disciplinary fields: education, anthropology, public health, marketing, geography, rural sociology, political science, and others. The roots of diffusion-of-innovation research include three foundational diffusion models: Gabriel Tarde and Imitation, George Simmel's Stranger, and the British and German-Austrian Diffussionist (Rogers, 2003). In his model, Rogers describes five phases of the innovation-decision process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation.

Among Rogers's (2003) ideas associated with this model, three of his premises, or generalizations, have important implications for the present study, particularly for how ideas and concepts provided by leadership (also known as *innovations*) are shared during an LSOC initiative, such as leadership programs and their messages:

> Generalization 5-13: Mass media channels are relatively more important at the knowledge stage, and interpersonal channels are relatively more important at the persuasion stage in the innovation-decision process. (p. 205)
>
> Generalization 5-15: Mass media channels are relatively more important than interpersonal channels for earlier adopters than for late adopters. (p. 211)
>
> Generalization 6-3: The complexity of an innovation, as perceived by members of a social system, is negatively related to its rate of adoption. (p. 257)

These generalizations are especially important in adopting new ideas, concepts, and meanings within organizations because communication at all stages of adoption creates, defines, and sustains culture and can support organizational initiatives (Van Tiem, Mosely, & Dessinger, 2001). For example, Generalizations 5-13 and 5-15 are key factors in helping implement any change initiative. In the case of implementing an LSOC initiative, such as getting employees to adopt the idea of "being a leader" or "adopting organizational values," various communication methods are required at various phases of the innovation-decision process (Rogers, 2003).

According to Rogers's (2003) Generalization 5-13, in the innovation-decision process, mass media channels are relatively more important at the knowledge stage, and interpersonal channels are relatively more important at the persuasion stage. Therefore, human resource (HR) professionals and OD and ID practitioners involved in LSOC efforts should realize that at the beginning of the change initiative, interpersonal communication channels are going to be more effective in persuading the organization to change. Thus, at the early stages, communications should be more personal.

For example, at HealthCare (the corporation in the present study), the company's management and its leadership learning and development organization have key cultural and managerial messages, based on business strategies that they incorporate into the programs offered to leaders within the organization. Because the training and development programs are a major vehicle for communicating and implementing those messages, the managers work with training and development personnel in the design of these programs. In this way, those in the HRD, ID, and IT profession are able to have direct, personal communication with management. However, in turn, the managers and leaders then need to carry those messages into their own organizations within HealthCare, thereby putting Rogers's (2003) research into practice.

According to Rogers's (2003) Generalization 6-3, innovations should not be complex. This key idea is obvious, but difficult to apply because large organizations are already built upon complex systems. Therefore, large organizational change communications, such as leadership programs and related messages, must be made simple to understand, using appropriate and various visual communication channels (e.g., printed materials, websites, e-mails, live messages). Complex, large companies need to find simple, systematic, and sustainable communications that support their LSOC initiatives, ones that can influence the adoption of many implementations occurring in an organization, such as changing processes, rewards and recognition systems, mergers, reorganization, and organizational strategies.

A major strength of Rogers's (2003) innovation-decision process model is that it is based upon 5,000 published studies of various changes, including adoption of hybrid seed corn, use of modern antibiotic drugs, and prevention of HIV/AIDS. The extensiveness of Rogers's research thereby helps us understand behavioral change and the factors that influence it across a range of persuasive initiatives. As he points out, in the past, diffusion research generally investigated each innovation as if it were independent from other innovations. In reality, however, innovations are usually being diffused at about the same time in a system, and they are interdependent. Although scholars find it simpler to investigate the spread of each innovation, Rogers claims that doing so is a distortion of reality.

Discourse and Organizational Change

A research study that supports the elements of adoption and relates to each of the constructs presented in this chapter is Woodman et al.'s (2001) study reported in "Organizational Change as Discourse: Communicative Actions and Deep Structures in the Context of Information Technology Implementation." In their study, they address the issue of "discourse as a duality of communicative actions and deep structures, mediated by the modality of interpretive schemes, and [they] develop a discourse analysis methodology based on the fields of hermeneutics and rhetoric" (p. 755). Specifically, they examined how, over a five-year period, discourse shaped organizational change processes when an electronic support system was implemented in the London insurance market.

Their methodology included three streams of discourse research: functional, interpretive, and critical. First, the functional stream focuses on "how language can be applied to such issues as the exercise of leadership and management in organizational change" (p. 756). Second, the interpretive stream emphasizes the "construction of social and organizational reality through its effects on actors' thoughts, interpretations, and actions" (p. 756). And third, the critical stream relies on the radical idea of how social and organizational change is achieved through a relationship of social domination.

Woodman et al. (2001) used a real-time methodology that involved following a pilot implementation of an electronic support system for the insurance industry over a five-year period. The authors selected several firms that used various implementation procedures. Also, their subjects included people in a wide variety of positions within the organization but who also shared deep structures and communicative actions with respect to their positions. Their research methods ranged from semistructured, in-depth interviews; analysis of document sources; observations; and discourse analysis. In their assessment, Woodman et al. found that the discursive approach was effective in studying organizational change efforts during implementation. Moreover, their study gives researchers a comprehensive view of multiple discourses and their interrelations and impact.

Among Woodman et al.'s (2001) findings were that the organizations had conflicting interpretations, influence, and deep structures related to the implemented change and that these could be attributed to various contextual settings and a lack of

common ground among stakeholders and managers. They concluded that the conflicting discourses and system contradictions had adverse effects on the implementation and system-wide change processes. Finally, they recommended that stakeholders must go further toward understanding a group's deep structures, values, and beliefs, for these are what help create the type of new synthesis that can occur at only the communicative level.

Cognition and Organizational Change

Another research study, this one a longitudinal case study, is reported in Swan's (1995) "Exploring Knowledge and Cognitions in Decisions about Technological Innovation: Mapping Managerial Cognitions." Swan's argument is that knowledge and cognition are important for innovation decisions and implementation effectiveness, for example, the technical innovations as well as the nontechnical administrative components such as procedures, policies, and organizational forms. Swan purports that knowledge, schemas, mental models, and scripts help to make up the cognitive and political processes that managers use when making decisions about innovations and implementations. Similar to Woodman et al. (2001), Swan agrees that organizations are socially constructed and that organizational actors or employees approach innovations, including technical ones, from their own cognitive views and belief systems. Both Woodman et al. (2001) and Swan (1995) maintain that the interaction between cognition and organizational actions is one for further research because organizational actions are embedded in context and the environment, which

change over a period of time. However, Swan's research approach involved the use of cognitive maps, process research, and the retrospective research approach to explore the interaction between cognition and organizational outcomes in the diffusion of innovative technologies. Swan's findings are similar to those of Woodman et al. insofar as knowledge and managerial beliefs about the innovations had an influence in the success and timeliness of their implementation.

Swan (1995) concludes that mapping methodologies and semiotic analysis are worthy approaches for understanding how managers think in order to generate negotiations during implementation. Doing so aids the leaders, managers, instructional technologists, HRD professionals, and organizational development and/or performance technologists who need to implement innovations by helping them understand more fully the deep structures and meanings held within the organization in which they are trying to create a change. Deep structures and belief systems clearly were evident in both studies (Swan, 1995; Woodman et al., 2001) as a key area for further attention during implementations.

These deep structures, shared meanings, and belief systems may be understood by the culture theory provided by Schein (1985, 1992, 1999). Theories of culture, semiotics, and metaphors, which are explained later in this chapter, all further understanding of the development and use of signs and symbols necessary in communication and/or training alongside LSOC initiatives. Therefore, the study next discusses at Schein's culture theory.

Culture

Leaders use the theoretical foundation or theories of organizational culture so that they may analyze and manage their organizations. Theory is useful in helping to learn more about their culture. Schein's (1999) definition of culture is the "sum total of all the shared, taken-for-granted assumptions that a group has learned throughout its history" (p. 29). Schein's (1992) theory is based upon existing theories, proposed in 1950, such as Theory Z (Ouchi, 1981) and Deal and Kennedy's (1982, 2000) theory addressing the importance of organizational culture and development. In their book *Corporate Culture: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life*, Deal and Kennedy confirmed the idea of corporate culture and its importance in management. The culture of any organization is a reflection of the deeply held values and behaviors of relatively few individuals, those of the CEO and maybe a handful of senior executives in larger companies, similar in the case with HealthCare. However, other scholars of change, such as Argyris and Schön (1974; 1975; 1992) defined *culture* as espoused values.

Schein's (1992) culture theory and analysis of organizations were influenced by much prior research: Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs; McGregor's (1960) theory X and theory Y leadership styles; Lorsch's (1985) and Kotter and Heskett's (1992) research, indicating that assumptions form various cultural paradigms within a culture; and Lewin's (1947) research, which initially examined the dynamics of change in a human system and which Schein transferred to his conception of organizational culture.

Culture has been defined in various ways, but in general, it can be thought of as shared beliefs, knowledge, mental models, or constructs that influence how members perceive and interpret their world (Schein, 1992; Smirich, 1983). Culture can be thought of as the organizationally shared thoughts and common frames of references (Schein, 1995). Argyris and Schön (1974) conceptualized organizations as a reflection of assumptions, beliefs, and norms that guide the behavior within the organization.

To sum things up, Schein (1992) defined *culture* as

> a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 12)

His definition is a fitting one for the culmination of ideas presented in this part of the literature review. As employees are seeking a deeper perspective of the organization they work in, they are aiming to learn why organizations and employees operate in a certain behavior.

Corporate culture is a different way of understanding organizational life created and developed by the members of the organization (Schultz, 1992; Smircich, 1983). According to Schein (1992),

> If we understand the dynamics of culture, we will be less likely to be puzzled, irritated, and anxious when we encounter the unfamiliar and seemingly irrational behavior of people in organizations, and we will have a deeper understanding not only of why various groups of people or organizations can be so different but also why it is so hard to change them. (pp. 4-5)

Therefore, the culture of an organization has a large influence on how it evolves. As instructional technologists, HRD professionals, and organizational development and/or performance technologists, particularly leaders, designing and developing LSOC initiatives for planned change, the more we become better educated about the nature of organizational culture, the more we gain important information to assist them in adapting to a constantly changing organization. As Schein (1992) states,

> A deeper understanding of cultural issues in groups and organizations is necessary to decipher what goes on in them but, even more important, to identify what may be the priority issues for leaders and leadership. Organizational cultures are created in part by leaders, and one of the most decisive functions of leadership is the creation, the management, and sometimes even the destruction of culture. (p. 5)

A critical part of this process, and one critical to success, is understanding the importance of culture and how it influences an organization.

Schein's (1992) idea of culture varies from other scholars. He notes, "Organizations tend to break down into subunits based on technology, products, markets, geographies, and occupations. The subunits are more likely to develop their own subcultures because of their shared core technologies and learning experiences" (Schein, 1995, p. 3). Schein (1996) supports cultural anthropologists' idea of culture as shared meaning; a shared social reality; or a set of shared, taken-for-granted assumptions commonly held by a group or subgroup. Some of these include espoused values, habits of thinking, mental models, linguistic paradigms, shared meanings, and "root metaphors" or integrating symbols and sign systems. Schein (1992) extends on the idea of shared meanings and includes the importance of shared learning and dialogue, especially in his definition of culture:

> The most useful way to think about culture is to view it as the accumulated shared learning of a given group, covering behavioral, emotional, and cognitive elements of the group members' total psychological functioning. For shared learning to occur, there must be a history of shared experience, which in turn implies some stability of membership in the group. Given such stability and a shared history, . . . meaning will cause the various shared elements to form into patterns that eventually can be called culture. (p. 10)

According to Schein (1992), shared learning exists deep in the organization and is a significant part of its culture. Also, new paradigms are formed as these elements connect with each other, thus serving as the deepest level of an organization's culture. For all of these reasons, therefore, Schein's (1992) theory of culture, and especially organizational culture, is a construct of great importance to this study. It accounts systematically for many of the factors that need to be considered by those designing and developing LSOC initiatives for planned change: namely, they must extend their understanding of the deeper dimensions of culture–shared assumptions and meanings about what is happening within the organization and its culture.

After discussing culture change and the critical role of leadership, Schein (1995) then brings together various implications for leaders (if they are to become leaders) and culture managers. As in the case of HealthCare's context of management training, managers and leaders who try to change or influence the behavior of subordinates often encounter resistance to change at a level that seems beyond reason. For example, observations of some of the lead-the-leader activities suggest that many think that sometimes department members seem to be more interested in fighting with each other than in getting the job done. Schein (1992; 1995; 1999) states that

managers must work from a more anthropological model, and getting to understand more about the culture is one way to do that. Managers who know more about the shared meaning of a group–in specific, for the purposes of this study, how the group uses metaphors and how it integrates symbols, ideas, images–the more the leaders or group members can assist in creating new meaning, in managing, and in getting their organization to adapt to change.

Schein's (1992) key ideas apply directly to the challenge presented in Chapter 1. Primarily, these are his three levels of culture: exposed values, shared meaning, and root metaphors–all of which are manifested in the signs and symbols organizations use to create and maintain shared meaning. In the case of studying culture, theories about the development of signs, symbols, and metaphors (that is, artifacts) used in communication and/or training alongside LSOC initiatives are especially needed. Among the many organizational artifacts (e.g., language, technology, products) that help to explain an organization's culture, symbols are the most ambiguous and difficult to decipher. Symbols and symbol use are used to explain culture with images that groups develop to characterize themselves (Schein, 1999). For instance, if "leadership" signs and symbols were to be provided in training and communication programs used in a LSOC initiative, the meaning of leadership would have to be shared and understood to be accepted.

Schein's (1999) ideas of exposed values are presented as someone's idea of "the way we do things around here . . . the company climate" (p. 15). According to Schein (1995), there is a need for shared language and mental models for what is real.

There is a need to focus on the dialogue and through social constructions of reality in groups and subgroups to create common realities (Schein, 1995). Therefore, the exposed values of "leadership" must be created together and observed together in order to become a shared, cultural meaning.

Both Schein (1992) and Rogers (2003) explain the knowledge or shared meaning as being introduced by the leaders, change agents, and innovators, or early knowers, in an organization. To achieve shared meaning and consensus, a group needs shared language and shared assumptions. Most communication breakdowns between people result from their lack of awareness that, in the first place, they are making different assumptions about meaning categories (Schein, 1995). Because culture is a set of shared assumptions, the contextual meaning of cultural assumptions hence creates a vehicle for their understanding. However, not all parts of a culture are relevant to any given issue. Hence, attempting to study an entire culture in all of its facets is not only impractical but also usually inappropriate. Because insiders are capable of understanding and making explicit the assumptions and meanings that make up their culture, Schein believes that changes in organizational practices, aimed at solving the problems that prompted the culture analysis, can often be achieved by building on existing assumptions. However, that change in the cultural assumptions themselves, if necessary, will rarely, if ever, involve the whole culture.

One way to understand those assumptions is to examine symbols representing the change or concept. Studies that have used symbolism in organizational change initiatives include Armenakis, Fredenberger, Cherones, & Field's (1995) study, which

developed items that were clearly more expressive and more technical in order to assess the extent of symbolism used in LSOC initiatives. Additionally, these symbols represented the actions necessary to create readiness for change, implement corrective actions, and encourage adoption and institutionalization of the changes (Armenakis et al., 1995). By identifying the cultural symbols that depicted readiness within the organization, the change agents were better prepared to create readiness for change, implement corrective actions, and encourage adoption and institutionalization of the changes.

Because basic underlining assumptions, meanings, and mental models are the unconscious essence of culture, it is at this level where individuals must challenge and question their shared basic assumptions and meaning (Schein, 1992; 1995). Accordingly, if visual signs and symbols of the organization's "leadership" concept are created, challenged, and questioned, then the development and design of such signs and symbols used in communication and/or training, alongside LSOC initiatives, must be flexible and adaptive.

Schein's (1992; 1995; 1999) theoretical strength is that he is a researching practitioner and that his observations closely match the phenomena of culture. He provides practical case studies that support this theory. His weakness is that he does not provide a methodology that can be used to apply his theoretical foundations but only a framework within which to understand culture and shared meaning, as used in this study. However, in his defense, he thinks that these methodologies and theories are not so much weak as they are understudied, -researched, and -developed (Schein,

1996). Gaps in Schein's research are that he did not view problems and cultural differences from an economic and social view as well but focused more on the psychological aspect. Future research on Schein's theoretical foundation should include topics on diagnosing and changing organizational cultures with competing values frameworks or using more insiders' views for deciphering the cultures and shared meaning; analyzing visuals, signs, and symbols; and making comparisons that may accomplish this task.

Despite these limitations, Schein's (1992; 1996; 1999) assumptions and observations closely match the experiences of this researcher. His theory not only provides a knowledge base in national organizational culture in comparison with other international organizations (though less on the latter) but also is worth notice in dealing with those issues, especially with foreign companies interested in understanding how American business operates and how its cultures form. His effort also contributes a solid foundation for research involving other disciplines such as social science, management in business administration, organization development, human resources, and psychology. For instance, in his theory, he incorporates psychology and social science in describing human nature and applying it to the nature of organizations. His case studies on technology and international multicultural companies provide evidence for his theory, which helps persuade researchers and practitioners that they need to observe appropriate viewpoints. His analytical measurement of change is extremely comprehensive and practical. However, his theoretical weakness is that a good amount of his research is limited to the U.S. and he

does not include examples of international organizations and cultures, such as those in areas of Asia and Europe. But for the purposes of the HealthCare study, this was not a concern.

Understanding Organizational Culture

Although this study does not formally focus on diagnosing HealthCare's culture, it is important to recognize that there is an overwhelming amount of literature written on the subject and that it is common consensus that understanding organizational culture—and its theory, research, and practice—is critically important for understanding an organization more fully and the organization's shared meanings. Organizational culture is a topic that has been addressed in professional journals, books, and conferences, and virtually everyone agrees that it is a topic of practical importance for leadership, managers, theorists, researchers, human resource professionals, and organizational diagnosis practitioners.

For example, in order to acquire a deeper understanding of culture at all levels of organizational life, it is important to gather deeper understanding of the cultural concepts so to understand how organizations really work. Morgan (1997) observes that patterns of belief or shared meaning, thus culture, "can exert a decisive influence on the overall ability of the organization to deal with the challenges that it faces" (p. 129). And Eagan (1994) warns, "Many change efforts fail because they do not factor in cultural realities" (p. 118).

The literature reviewed in this section supports the discovery and analysis of metaphors used by organizational members as a useful method for acquiring deeper understandings of culture, groups, and subgroups at various levels of an organization. As such, it presents a case for using data gained from organizational subgroups, as done in the context of this study, as a means of tapping into members' perceptions of culture and shared meaning. Cultures are expressions of the unconscious psychological process (Smirich, 1983), much as Schein (1992) purports. Leaders, managers, instructional technologists, HRD professionals, and organizational development and/or performance technologists designing and developing LSOC initiatives for planned change need to appreciate and address a variety of potential and influential unconscious processes going on in the organizations. Having a deeper meaning of organizational cultures and understanding culture as a common thread among beliefs helps us to perceive and understand organizational patterns within the organization. To achieve this deeper understanding, it is necessary to look below the surface to discover taken-for-granted meanings of language use and symbols, to find glimpses into the real meanings that are of great significance to an organization (Morgan, 1998).

It is the consensus that understanding culture is an essential part of the OD, HRD, and IT practitioner's role (Howard, 1994). These practitioners should not initiate interventions without understanding the problems that prompted the interventions. However, if the deeper understandings of the organization are not comprehended, then implementation and adoption of the LSOC initiatives are likely to

fail (Eagan, 1994; Mourier & Smith, 2001). Also, to manage culture, it is a danger not to appreciate the deep assumptions and meanings within the culture (Schein, 1999).

Morgan (1997) contends that having deeper understandings about culture helps us comprehend how the organization deals with changes and challenges. By understanding how organizations function, leaders and managers can understand or influence culture and lead the organization to adopt, create, or invent new-shared meanings. Thus, corporate culture is another way of understanding organizational life (Schultz, 1992; Smircich, 1983). This is not to suggest, however, that organizational culture is universally shared or perceived within organizations. In studies of an organization's deeper meanings and beliefs, Keeton and Mengistu (1992) explain that organizational culture varies across organizational characteristics, such as management, nationality, and demographics. Therefore, it is important to understand more about how various levels within an organization may have various understandings and thus define different organizational shared meanings and cultures (Helms & Stern, 2001). Thus, studies that examine the elements affecting employees' perceptions of organizational culture are important to organizational research.

Factors Influencing Beliefs

Indeed, Helms and Stern (2001) suggest that employee beliefs at the organizational and individual levels are often different. They believe that the organizational level is affected by membership, and the individual level is affected by demographic characteristics. Beliefs, however, depend upon perception, which is

extremely important to consider in the development of signs and symbol systems used in communication and/or training, alongside LSOC initiatives. "Perception is the process of comprehending the world around us—trees, faces, movies, cars in traffic, raindrops on the window, the page before you" (Kostelnick & Roberts, 1998, p. 48). Visual thinking is associated with visual perception. When we visually think of something, we may focus our attention on a focal point, but soon we draw upon our past experiences and these influence our perception (Arnheim, 1969; Kostelnick & Roberts, 1998).

Analyzing Shared Beliefs and Meanings

In the case of assisting the shared meaning around a particular topic, visual thinking activities can be effective in rooting out deeply held and often subconscious assumptions and beliefs about the organization. As participants think about concepts of leadership and what leadership looks like to them, images come to mind. Leadership does not represent one thing visually; instead, individuals conceptualize in their minds what such a term means to them. Mental conceptions or visual representations may form infinite amounts of pictures, images, or symbols that have meaning for each individual. But this, of course, can be problematic when organizations are establishing communication campaigns around a particular concept, such as leadership, quality, or organizational values.

In order to visually communicate, companies often provide a visual image or metaphor to help align the perceptions of the concept of leadership. But this can be

problematic, too, as everyone's perceptions of the topic are based in context and within his or her own past experiences. Thus, the challenge for those involved in change initiatives is how to align perceptions of the concept they are trying to share, such as leadership, to create a shared meaning–something to which particular groups can relate. One way to do this is to establish a metaphorical framework as a guide to thinking about and conceptualizing the leadership concept. Creating a metaphor for dialogue can serve as a springboard from which people can articulate their ideas about something and gives participants the ability to communicate on the same level, thus solidifying shared meaning and cultural understanding. Metaphorical references that are commonly understood can assist participants in describing abstract concepts and in creating or maintaining shared beliefs.

Cognitions include thoughts as well as thought processes, assumptions, beliefs, schemas, cognitive scripts, perception, and meaning making or sense making (Driscoll, 2000). Researchers have defined organizational culture to include elements such as a shared belief system within an organization (Schein, 1996).

O'Hara-Devereaux and Pardini (1993) mention the origins of graphics, in its earliest form, as the practice of talking, gesturing, and drawing in the dirt. They claim that this type of communication connects various cultures visually in that the group communicating agrees on the meanings of the symbols and shapes used for its common understandings.

Several scholars recommend a cultural approach for businesses and organizations researching how an organization's deeper meanings support a greater

understanding of the organizational culture and its organizational life (e.g., Alvesson & Berg, 1992; Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundburg, & Martin, 1991; Smircich, 1983). In designing and developing LSOC initiatives, it is best to understand the socially shared ideas and understandings of how people in the same work context relate and make sense of their leaders, work tasks, customers, and each other (Schein, 1996). For instance, culture is shared meanings, ideas, and understandings in terms of control and coordination in complex and uncertain organizational situations (Alvesson, 1998).

Helms and Stern (2001) assert that employees' hierarchical levels within the organization are likely to affect their perceptions about the culture of the organization. The reasons are that the amount of training the employees receive, their interaction with management, and the amount of information to which they are exposed are all a function of their hierarchical level in the organization. All these factors influence employees' perceptions of their corporation. In fact, when organizations are assessed, these factors are mentioned as the likely reasons for an organization's underlying culture reflecting various perceptions or outcomes at various levels (Helms & Stern, 2001; Keeton & Mengistu, 1992; Schein, 1996).

Because it is relevant to organizational perceptions, top managers and leaders within an organization need to assist with developing consistent beliefs within the organization. However, subgroups in organizations are likely to have their own perceptions of the organization, thus fragmenting the culture on various organizational levels. Recognizing this is important so that understanding of shared meaning can

occur at multiple levels as well as in communications directed at these various levels of the organization (Schein, 1996).

As Rogers's (2003) generalization supports, interpersonal communications at the persuasion level should not depend on using mass media communication channels, which are more appropriate at the knowledge level. For LSOC interventions and communications, therefore, it is important for leaders and managers to tailor their persuasion messages at the interpersonal level. This way, subgroups within the organization that do not have much contact with top management are able to apply the messages to their own contexts, assuming the manager is sufficiently aware of the subgroups' own deeply held, shared beliefs.

Additionally, Helms and Stern (2001) have discovered some factors influencing employees' perceptions, including differences in cultural dimensions across age groups, ethnic groups, and gender lines. These factors have an important effect on culture and organizational meaning making. Therefore, again, leaders, managers, and instructional technologists, HRD professionals, and organizational development and/or performance technologists designing and developing LSOC initiatives for planned change must take into account these differences, possibly customizing cultural messages for each organizational subgroup (Helms & Stern, 2001).

The importance of using groups to mine organizational culture(s) and shared meaning is stressed by Taylor and Van Every (2000) when discussing "people's experience of the environment, and hence the stimulation to which they are exposed,

[which] is seldom, or never, the same for any two people" (p. 220). Taylor and Van Every explain that with this "social sharing of cognition: No single individual can claim definitive knowledge of the environment" (p. 220). Similarly, Boden (1994) states that "meanings are embedded in ongoing action. . . . Meanings, most importantly, do not occur in isolated cognitive phenomena . . . they are constructed *interactively* and under quite pressing conditions of time and space" (p. 18). In essence, then, meanings are socially constructed in a group in that the meanings create a shared understanding of what is discussed (Schein, 1995). The group creates and maintains meaning over time and invents new meanings that add to the shared meaning of the group. Sometimes, the meanings involve the creative language of metaphors, and in such situations, the metaphorical meanings are unique to that group at that time (Pondy et al., 1983). However, before the metaphors are used to create shared meaning, it is important to discuss the organizational symbols that are found within the culture to help create shared meaning.

Organizational Symbols

Although the number of studies devoted to organizational symbols are few, some scholars have examined organizational symbolism as a way of revealing organizational culture and organizational meanings (Dandridge, Mitroff, & Joyce, 1980; Morgan, 1998; Morgan, Frost, & Pondy, 1983; Trice & Beyer, 1993). Because culture defines the shared frame of reference that typifies organizations and guides members' perceptions and behavior, symbols–and the meanings assigned to them–are

usually created within that cultural context (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997; Schein, 1985; Trice & Beyer, 1993).

An organization's symbolism and symbols include anything that has symbolic meaning or stands for or represents something else. Sometimes the symbolic meaning is obvious, and other times, a symbol's meaning may be unknown or not as familiar to its organizational members (Pondy et al., 1983). By understanding an organization's symbols and their meanings, its culture can often by inferred. Daft and Weick (1984) support the idea that because organizations are interpretive systems, their cultures can be understood through their symbols and metaphor use and by studying how those symbols are used in the sense-making process of a group. Daft and Weick believe that symbolic use is a determinant of organizational culture and that symbols may be used to understand the organizational meanings of various things.

Researchers have found the role of organizational symbolism useful in creating and maintaining meanings in organizations (e.g., Dandridge, 1983; Dandridge, Mitroff, & Joyce, 1980; Pondy et al., 1983; Trice & Beyer, 1993). Research in organizational symbolism focuses on examining artifacts, language, and metaphors, to name a few (Pondy et al., 1983; Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997; Schein, 1992; Smircich, 1983; Trice & Beyer, 1993). In general, organizational members communicate the conscious and unconscious actions, values, and emotions inherent in the organization's use of organizational symbols. Technically, symbols can serve as information-carrying devices that help organizations achieve goals and even help define the organization (Armenakis et al., 1995). For LSOC initiatives, the use of

symbols is a possible way to change, support, or assist with the shared meaning and behavior of subgroups. Thus, according to Armenakis et al. (1995), change agents must understand the impact of symbolism before incorporating it into LSOC initiatives on subgroups. Beyond that, Preston (1993) also recommends that training programs ought to help participants understand their organizational culture and its symbol use.

In the future, researchers and those involved in communication and training surrounding organizational change initiatives will probably need to explore how signs and symbols can be developed and used in a company's "internal branding," for such signs and symbols can remind, excite, and/or elicit behaviors that the company would like to change. Individuals have mental maps that lead them to behave in a certain way that may help to contribute to learning beyond the classroom and into organizational learning and cultural transformation (Schein, 1992). Thus, internal branding that supports individual or cultural mental maps must also be taken into account. And if internal branding of multicultural organizational change initiatives needs to be different, then designers will have to develop them accordingly. They must know the schemas, mental maps, and models that guide individuals' actions and then develop culturally appropriate signs and symbols to be used in communication and training programs (Argyris & Schön, 1996). One field with which designers therefore need familiarity is that of semiotics–the study of signs, symbols, and their meaning.

Semiotics

No research into signs and symbols or how people reveal and create meaning would be complete without a review of semiotics. As the third theoretical foundation for this study, semiotics is especially important. Semiotics focuses on the signs (or symbols) people construct to represent the world around them. Semiotic theory links the processing of signs and symbols and their relationship to each other, how knowledge is constructed, and how meaning is made. It relates to both external (social, cultural) and internal (mental, cognitive) interpretation. Semiotic research is based upon a variety of fields of study, such as linguistics, logic, and cultural symbols.

For this study, semiotics provides a framework within which to understand meaning; however, semiotics can also be used as a method for analyzing material that emerges from linguistics and from literary, cultural, and textual analysis aimed at studying social phenomena (see Chapter 3). Semiotics, then, is both a method and a theoretical construct that supports the continued understanding of meaning.

Roots of Semiotics

Many theorists, such as Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940), Saussure, Sechehaye, and Riedlinger (1983), Barthes (1977), and Mets (1981), have contributed to semiotic theory. Chief among them are Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Saunders Peirce. Barley (1983) states, "Semiotics is an eclectic and amorphous field that traces its roots to the teachings of Ferdinand de Saussure [1966], the father of modern structural

linguistics, and to the pragmatic philosophy of Charles Saunders Peirce [1958]" (p. 394).

According to Barley (1983), semiotics concerns the principles by which signification occurs. *Signification* refers both to (a) the processes by which events, words, behaviors, and objects carry meaning for the members of a given community, and (b) to the content conveyed. The main difference between Saussure and Peirce is that although Saussure was primarily concerned with messages and their meaning, Peirce was concerned with those as well as the source of signs or their receivers. Because this study focuses on examining not only signs and their meaning, Peirce's more robust theory of semiotics is therefore of greater relevance and is explained more fully below than is Saussure's theory.

Saussurean Semiotics

The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (Saussure et al., 1983) studied the internal structures of linguistic systems, semiotics, and signs. From early on, semiologists have studied the relationships among the parts of a message and the interaction of the component parts that create meaning (Barley, 1983). For Saussure, semiotic theory is based on a dyadic relationship. He claims that a sign within a system of meaning may be separated into two components: the signifier and the signified. In essence, the *signifier* is the material vehicle of meaning, and the *signified* actually "is" the meaning.

The limitation of the Saussurean approach, according to Botan and Soto (1998), is that "it does not focus on either the source of signs or receivers, such as the audience/public" (p. 8) but rather on only the message and the meaning it carries. By contrast, Peirce's semiotic theory, based on a trichotomy of signs, is richer in that it accounts for the interrelationship among all three: the message, meaning, and the source and receiver.

Also, whereas Saussure's emphasis is on the linguistic unit, Peirce's is on the process of interpretation, making his conception of meaning development more dynamic. "Signification, for Peirce, was a process of interpretation in the mind of the interpreter rather than merely a result of a process internal to the sign system" (Botan & Soto, 1998, p. 9). As Botan and Soto explain,

> The Peircean model reflected what happens when there is interpretation; a sign (*representamen*) evokes an idea (*interpretant*) in the mind of the person-interpreter about something else (object). The interpreter (i.e., the real person that interprets the sign) is not to be confused with the interpretant, which is an idea in the mind of the interpreter. (p. 9)

As explained shortly, Peirce's model is based on a triadic relationship in his sign system that is at play whenever interpretation occurs. For this reason, Peircean semiotics provides "an opportunity to explore the process of interpretation in strategic communication" (Botan & Soto, 1998, p. 9).

The following section provides more detail about Peirce's sign theory and how his theory and trichotomy of signs support this study.

Peircean Semiotics

Peirce's theory and categories of signs provide a theoretical foundation for the present study. His categories of signs–icons, indexes, and symbols–serve as a heuristic model for this study's categorization of images or drawings, as well as the interpretation of the meanings of those images. In this study of metaphor use, his theory of semiotics is also important because it accounts for how language, knowledge, experience, and context are mediated through the use of signs.

Signs and Their Meaning

According to Peirce (cited in Houser & Kloesel, 1992), in the edited book *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, "every concept and every thought beyond immediate perception is a sign" (p. xxx). Peirce defines a *sign* as "anything which is so determined by something else, called its *object*, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its *interpretant*, that the latter is thereby mediately determined by the former" (p. xxx). Peirce believes that knowledge is acquired in two ways, by reasoning and by experience, and he argues that "all reasoning is an interpretation of signs of some kind" (p. 4).

Meaning

Meaning, according to Peirce, is thought that passes between two states–from ignorance to knowledge–and through to learning. To Peirce (cited in Hartshorne,

Weiss, & Burks, 1960), signs help define reality. The *interpretant* of a sign comes and goes between the interpreters in an infinite cycle or, as he explains,

> The object of representation [the idea of a sign] can be nothing but a representation of which the first representation is the interpretant. But an endless series of representations, each representing the one behind it, may be conceived to have an absolute object at its limit. The meaning of the representation can be nothing but the representation. In fact, it is nothing but the representation itself conceived as stripped of irrelevant clothing. But this clothing can never be completely stripped off; it is only changed for something more diaphanous. So there is an infinite regression here. Finally, the interpretant is nothing but another representation to which the torch of truth is handed along; and as representation, it is its interpretant again. (¶ 339)

As interpreters observing, individuals make continuous mental notes of the meanings that signs hold as they continue to evolve (Ransdell, 1977). Observers are imperative to understanding the sign relations in that they reflect on the beliefs of their observations. The infinite process itself involves signs that are preceding other signs that will be interpreted subsequently. Person A's interpretation of a sign can be a sign for Person B, and Person B's interpretation of Person A's sign can be a sign for someone else. This relationship may continue until we reach the final interpretation because the interpretant itself is a sign (Peirce, cited in Hartshorne et al., 1960).

In order to understand Peirce's definition of signs, it is first necessary to delve deeper into meaning, namely, to know (a) his concepts of degeneracy (firstness, secondness, and thirdness); (b) his triadic relation of sign, object, and interpretant; and (c) his three categories of signs: icon, index, and symbol. The following subsections explain the first two concepts, which help in understanding the uniqueness of interpretation in Peirce's theory of signs. The third concept is explained in detail in a separate subsection.

Much like Saussure et al.'s (1983) dyadic relation between "the signifier" and "the signified," Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940) establishes his sign relationship between the *representamen* (sign) and *object* (meaning). As provided by Buchler (1940), the sign, Peirce states, "is something that stands for somebody or something" (p. 99). The representamen or sign, which "creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign" (p. 115), is called the *interpretant* of the first sign. And, finally, the sign stands for something–its object–"not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of the representamen" (p. 115).

The main difference between Saussure et al. (1983) and Peirce is that with Peirce the sign relation results in a third element called the *Interpretant.* Finally, Peirce states that every sign is connected with the three things: the ground, the object, and the interpretant.

According to Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940), the sign is the most basic premise of semiotics because signs mediate all man can know. Again, since we know that a sign, or representamen, is something that stands for something else, signs can convey ideas. Peirce explains,

> "Idea" is here to be understood in a sort of platonic sense, very familiar in everyday talk; I mean in that sense in which we say that one man catches another man's idea, in which we say that when a man recalls what he was thinking at some previous time, he recalls the same idea, and in which a man continues to think anything, say for a tenth of a second, in so far as the thought continues to agree with itself during that time, that it is to have *like* content, it is the same idea, and is not at each instant of the interval a new idea. (p. 99)

Most importantly, Peirce maintains, "We think only in signs" (p. 115) and that mental signs are of mixed nature, symbol-parts called concepts or *objects.* Symbols and their

meaning can grow out of experience and its use. As Peirce states, "The art of reasoning is the art of marshalling such signs, and of finding out the truth" (p. 115).

In the present study, the way in which the participants create meaning, or determine what the organization and its leadership look like, depends on how they marshal the signs associated with the overarching metaphor of the stream. To explain the process of interpretation or meaning, Peirce (cited in Houser & Kloesel, 1992) asserts, "With every sign is one agent that utters the sign, acoustically, optically, visually or otherwise, while the other is the interpreter" (p. 403). The object of the sign is the idea or concept upon which the sign is built. Next, the interpretant of the sign comprehends the meaning of the sign through the emotions, energy, or logic it conveys. Peirce clarifies,

> The object and the interpretant are thus merely the two correlates of the sign; the one being antecedent, the other consequent of the sign. Signs signify something and name something else. . . .while that which it is intended to name must be ascertained not from the term itself but *by observation of the context or other attendant circumstances of its utterance.* (p. 429, emphasis added)

Trichotomy of sign. To Peirce, the sign relation is triadic. In other words, it mediates between the interpretant and its object. In order to illustrate the relation, Hookway (1985) provides an example of stripped bark on a tree:

> We observe freshly stripped bark on a tree, and we treat it as a sign of the recent presence of deer. We observe the bark, and we learn the presence of the deer from this observation; we claim that the stripped bark 'means' that deer have been in the area. The stripped bark, here, is the sign; as its object we can take the deer or the fact that there have been deer nearby; and the interpretant is our thought that there are deer nearby. We come to a thought about deer, but our cognitive contact with deer is mediated through the sign. (p. 122)

Having briefly explained Peirce's trichotomy of object, sign, and interpretant, we now turn our attention to his three categories of signs: icon, index, and symbol. These are important in this study because, as explained in the next chapter on methodology, they provided a useful way to categorize collected data concerning the initial meanings of leadership.

Central to Peirce's theory is his distinction among three principal kinds of signs–icons, indices, and symbols. As an overview, first, there are likenesses or *icons*. These convey ideas of the things they represent, simply by implying something else. Second, there are *indices*, which are defined as the physical attributes of a sign. Third, there are *symbols*, which acquire associated meanings by their usage in particular contexts. To put it in Peirce's (1885) words, he summarizes the three kinds of signs as the following:

> One very important triad is this: it has been found that there are three kinds of signs which are all indispensable in all reasoning; the first is the diagrammatic sign or ***icon,*** which exhibits a similarity or analogy to the subject of discourse; the second is the ***index,*** which like a pronoun demonstrative or relative, forces the attention to the particular object intended without describing it; the third [or symbol] is the general name or description which signifies its object by means of an association of ideas or habitual connection between the name and the character signified. (¶ 369)

Peirce maintains that pictorial ideas can stand for the likeness of a sign, and an example he provides is the intercommunication between two people of different languages. To communicate, they must resort to using imitative sounds, gestures, or drawings of pictures to represent a likeness of what they are trying to communicate. As in the present study, common experiences and a shared context are essential in determining the meaning (or *object*) of signs.

According to Peirce (cited in Houser & Kloesel, 1992), an *index* is "anything which focuses the attention [as] an indication" or "marks the junction between two portions of experience" (p. 8). In the case of *symbols*, what gives them meaning are not the things or words themselves but the ideas associated with them. In Peirce's words, individuals "realize the idea connected with the word; it [the word or symbol] does not, in itself, identify those things, . . . instead we are able to imagine those things, and have associated the word with them" (p. 9). Because Peirce's ideas are complex, in order to further distinguish among his conceptions of icon, index, and symbol, each concept is detailed separately.

Icons. According to Peirce (cited in Houser & Kloesel, 1992), an *icon* depends on similarity between the sign and its object. Icons convey ideas of the things they represent simply by virtue of their likeness; their qualities are analogous. Icons, made by similarity, share properties with what they represent and bear a resemblance to their objects without it having to exist at all (Peirce cited in Houser & Kloesel, 1992).

In early history, the first icons were probably images. Peirce explains, as edited by Buchler (1940),

> In all primitive writing, such as the Egyptian hieroglyphics, there are icons of nonlogical kind, the ideographs. In the earliest form of speech, there probably was a large element of mimicry. But in all languages known, such representations have been replaced by conventional auditory signs. These, however, are such that they can only be explained by icons. (p. 106)

Peirce's other examples of icons include paintings or material images, which may stand for ideas. For instance, the cross is an icon that has come to represent

Christianity; it evokes the image of Christ's cross and therefore the image and its broader meaning of Christ's followers are connected.

Icons derive their meaning through the associations people have invested in them over time and in specific contexts. Thus, Peirce is careful to note that the meaning of an icon also depends on how it is used and the way it is used to communicate an idea. Cross burning, for example, changes the direction of the cross icon's meaning. Also, used in an exorcism, the cross becomes a sign or way of warding off evil.

Most relevant to this study is that Peirce cites metaphors as examples of icons based on parallelism between a sign and its object or meaning. A metaphor such as "Life is a journey" is recognized as meaningful not because the two are identical (life = journey), but because there are inherent similarities between life and a journey (e.g., they both have a beginning and an end; they both suggest a trip through space and time; and both are fraught with potential dangers, accomplishments, and so on). Were someone to say, "Life is a table," one would not recognize it as a metaphor and neither would one be able to make sense of it because the two do not share obvious or logical similarities. They are not, to use an expression, birds of a feather. This is not to say, however, that new associations and meaning could not be created, as, for instance, poets are fond of doing. For example, in one of her poems, Emily Dickinson states, "'Hope' is the thing with feathers–That perches in the soul" (Karlin & Franklin, 1999, p. 140). Here, as in much poetry, the metaphor resonates by virtue of its originality and the new associations and meanings it creates in the mind of the reader. Out of the

context of the poem, however–say, in everyday conversation–to come up to someone and say, "'Hope' is the thing with feathers," one should expect quizzical looks, unless perhaps the other person is an English major familiar with the poem.

Finally, another example of metaphor, this time a popular one used by an insurance company, is that of the Allstate slogan, "You're in good hands with Allstate," and its logo of cupped hands. Here, the words "good hands" and the image of hands suggest a wealth of associations between the company and its services (e.g., protection, security, support, trust, care). And in this case, the meaning of the company and the words and images are similar, or at least, that is what the ad is intended to convey. By contrast, the metaphor would not work were the cupped hands and slogan used to advertise, say, beer: "you're in good hands with Budweiser."

Indices. An *index* refers directly to something, is of the same nature as the thing, and is connected to the object by virtue of what it does, not what it means. It asserts nothing by itself, just as the hands on a clock mean nothing if apart from the clock. Furthermore, without the hands, there would be no clock (at least in the case of an analog clock). The hands simply point to a specific time and, only with the numbers on the clock, do the hands (or the clock) mean something. Unlike the hands in the Allstate ad, the hands on a clock mean nothing beyond what they point to; they are not metaphors (icons) or symbols.

In explaining what an index is, Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940) states,

> [An index is] a sign, or representation, which refers to its object not so much because of its similarity or analogy with it, nor because it is associated with general characters which that object happens to possess, as because it is in dynamical (including special) connection both with the individual object, on

> the one hand, and with the senses of memory of the person for whom it serves as a sign, on the other hand. (p. 107)

In summary, Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940), explains that "Indices may be distinguished from other signs" in "that they have no significant resemblance to their objects," and thereby "they direct the attention to their objects by blind compulsion" (p. 108). Peirce, provides some examples of indices:

> "I see a man with a rolling gait. This is a probable indication that he is a sailor."
>
> "A sundial or clock indicates the time of day."
>
> "Geometricians mark letters against the different parts of their diagrams and then use those letters to indicate those parts."
>
> "A rap on the door is an index." (p. 108)

Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940) also states that words, such as "this" or "that," are indices but used alone do not denote an object. Instead, when said, the hearer must observe and establish a real connection between the mind and the object. Unlike symbols, which are conventional, some indexes are both conventional and natural. Indexes (or indices) on the other hand, need not bear resemblance to their objects but instead have a direct existential connection with their objects. Peirce uses the following story as an illustration of the role of index:

> Suppose two men meet upon a country road and one of them says to the other, "The chimney of that house is on fire." The other looks at him and descries a house with green blinds and a verandah having a smoking chimney. He walks on a few miles and meets a second traveler. Like a Simple Simon he says, "The chimney of that house is on fire." "What house?" asks the other. "Oh, a house with green blinds and a verandah," replies the simpleton. "Where is the house?" asks the stranger. He desires some index which shall connect his apprehension with the house meant. (p. 109)

To understand the index (the fire on the chimney) and successfully know what was meant (i.e., for the communication to be successful), the stranger had to look at the real house and establish an actual connection between the fellow and the house. However, communication between the man and the stranger is not fully successful because the indexical reference of the house does not work in this particular communication. Thus, observational activity is important in order for indexicality to be completed. Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940) argues that an index is a sign because of the dynamical connection with the object and with "the sense of memory of the person for whom it serves as a sign" (p. 107).

Symbols. Unlike icons, symbols have no direct association between the thing (the sign or symbol) and its meaning. Language itself is a symbol system. For example, words are representative of things or ideas, but there is no natural connection between a word its meaning–only that which it has acquired by common usage. Exceptions perhaps are words that sound like what they mean (i.e., onomatopoeia) such as "bang" or words whose etymologies, usually long forgotten, are rooted in metaphors. Thus, for example, in English, the word car is a second-order symbol representing our generic notion of car, which is a first-order symbol of the physical thing having four wheels, a motor, and passenger seats. But there is nothing "carish" about the word "car" that would connect it to either the image in our heads or the physical entity. The meaning of the word is simply conventional or rule-governed, as in its dictionary definition.

Accordingly, in defining what a symbol is, Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940) states that "a symbol is a representative character consist[ing] precisely in its being a rule that will determine its interpretant. All words, sentences, books, and other conventional signs are symbols" (p. 112). Peirce notes that "the "word" and its "meaning" do not differ unless some special sense be attached to "meaning." A symbol is known to be a law per se with an indefinite future (Buchler, 1940).

To illustrate, Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940) uses the following example:

> A man is walking with a child, points his arm up into the air, and says, "There is a balloon." The pointing arm is an essential part of the symbol without which the latter would convey no information. But if the child asks, "What is a balloon?" and the man replies, "It is something like a great big soap bubble," he makes the image a part of the symbol. Thus, while the complete object of a symbol, that is to say, its meaning, is of the nature of a law, it must denote an individual and must signify a character. A genuine symbol is a symbol that has a general meaning. (p. 112)

Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940) further explains, "A symbol is a sign naturally fit to declare that the set of objects which is denoted by whatever set of indices may be in certain ways attached to it is represented by an icon associated with it" (p. 113). In this way, icons, indices, and symbols may lean on one another. His example is the symbol of the word *loveth*. "Associated with this word is an idea, which is the mental icon of one person loving another" (p. 113). In the phrase, "Ezekeil loveth Huldah," both *Ezekeil* and *Huldah* are indices. He also states that, "the pair of objects denoted by the pair of indices . . . is represented by the icon, or the image in our minds of a lover and his beloved" (p. 113),

Because of the complexity of such interrelationships, and the near impossibility of paraphrasing Peirce, we turn again to Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940)

to summarize the gist of what this example suggests about icons, indices, and symbols:

> The icon has no dynamical connection with the object it represents; it simply happens that its qualities resemble those of that object, and excite analogous sensations in the mind for which it is a likeness. But it really stands unconnected with them. The index is physically connected with its object; they make an organic pair, but the interpreting mind has nothing to do with this connection, except remarking it after it is established. The symbol is connected with its object by virtue of the idea of the symbol-using mind, without which no such connection would exist. (p. 114)
>
> Symbols grow. They come into being by development out of other signs, particularly from icons or from mixed signs partaking of the nature of icons and symbols. We think only in signs. These mental signs are of mixed nature; the symbol-parts of them are called concepts. If a man makes a new symbol, it is by thoughts involving concepts. (p. 115)
>
> A symbol, once in being, spreads among the peoples. In use and in experience, its meaning grows. Such words as force, law, wealth, marriage, bear for us very different meanings from those they bore to our barbarous ancestors. (p. 115)

Anything can become a symbol. Furthermore, as explained above, a symbol for Peirce is closely related to icon and index, as a mixture of index and icon (for example, in the sentence, "This snow is white," "this snow" is index and "is white" is icon).

Summary of icon, index, and symbol. To summarize the relation of icon, index, and symbol, icon corresponds to the sameness of an object per se; index is an actual connection of an object, a causal, spatial-temporal, and material connection of the object (e.g., the symptom of the flu is the index of coughing or sneezing); and symbol is immediacy between sign and object. The icon has no dynamical connection with the object it represents; the index is physically connected with its object; but the

symbol is connected with its object by virtue of the idea or the symbol-using mind, without which no connection could exist. According to Peirce, a symbol depends on an index and an icon, and an index depends on an icon in turn (see Table 1).

Table 1

Peirce's Summary of Icons

Sign	Explanation	Example
Icon	• Excites analogous sensations in the mind of what the icon may try to represent • Qualities resemble those of the object • Represents its object by similarity • Excites the idea as an object on the brain • Stands for something merely because it resembles it • Serves to convey ideas of the things they represent simply by imitating them	• An idea • A painting • Images • Diagrams • Metaphors
Index	• Physically connected with the object • Meaning not derived by the mind's interpretation • Must be of the same character as the object • Denotes what it does • Asserts nothing • Denotes things without describing them • Shows something about things, on account of their being physically connected with them • Acts upon the nerves of the person addressed and forces his attention	• Hands on a clock • The veering of a weathercock • A letter attached to a diagram • "Hi there!"
Symbol	• The symbol is intrinsically connected with the idea or concept (i.e., the object). • The word and its meaning follow general rules. • Its interpretant must be the same description. • A constituent of a symbol may be an index or an icon. • Symbols become associated with their meanings by usage. Such are most words, and phrases, and speeches, and books, and libraries	• Words • Sentences • Books • Law

Assessment of Semiotic Theory

The value of Peirce's approach to semiotics is well expressed and summarized by Ransdell (1977):

> We are accustomed to thinking that we, as interpreters and users of signs, have it within our power–at least at times–to give meanings to things by pure acts of will or intention: thus we talk about "conventions" of meaning, or "conventional" meaning, which we arbitrarily establish as if in limitation of a divine fiat; we think we are capable of simply "stipulating" what a word means at will; we talk about "inventing languages" which will somehow be free from the limitations inherent in the words we use in the process of inventing the new ones; and so on. Against this, Peirce's semiotical viewpoint implies that all we can really do, as interpreters, is to observe or note the meanings which things already have. (p. 55)

Strengths of Semiotics

The strengths of semiotics are that it reminds us that although the things around us may seem "natural" and obvious, they are constructs of reality through social convention. Semiotics can be helpful in directing attention to practices commonly taken for granted and in leading to the realization that what is considered to be purely objective and independent of human interpretation is really a result of our construction of reality. It helps us realize that information and meaning are not simply contained in the media around us and that, whether conscious of it or not, we actively create meaning.

Weaknesses of Semiotics

A major weakness of semiotics is the conflicting views that make it hard to discern what the theory actually is. There is much discrepancy among seimioticians regarding what semiotics actually entails. Semiotic analysis, in some instances, is unsystematic and lacks empirical evidence. Semiotic gaps are that much research is to be done regarding symbol systems and their relationship with specific fields of study and media. Semiotic analysis still tends to focus on linguistics or fall back into verbal modes, rather than explore other modes. Future semiotic research should address how perceptual codes used in sign systems impact the viewer's interpretation or what can be implied from the sign system that a group creates to articulate meaning. A study such as the present one, exploring whether shared meaning is created via the construction of signs and symbols, does contribute to the body of semiotic knowledge.

The weaknesses of semiology as a method of studying meaning can be largely overcome by using content analysis, which is derived from a social-science tradition rather than from linguistics and literary criticism. Content analysis can do little more than to "unpack" the surface meaning of an image in a rather obvious way; its strength stems from its ability to relate this information to the sample as a whole in a rigorous manner and to detect patterns of similarities and differences.

Metaphor

Symbols and metaphors support each other with the meanings they generate. Metaphors help to generate knowledge and create reality by communicating meaning

to others in the organization (Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Morgan (1986; 1997; 1998) contends that for leaders and managers to be successful, they have to become capable of understanding complex and vague organizational behaviors using metaphors. The same can be said of researchers studying metaphor use in organizations.

This section reviews the literature pertaining to metaphors, the fourth, final, and perhaps most important construct that serves as the theoretic foundation for the present study. Metaphors have been studied by many researchers representing various disciplines, including business (Clancy, 1989), education (Ortony, 2001), linguistics (Black, 1993), organizational behavior (Grant & Oswick, 1996; Morgan, 1986, 1997, 1998), organizational symbolism (Pondy et al., 1983), and psycholinguistics and cognitive science (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Definition of Metaphor

First, it is necessary to explain what a metaphor is. In their seminal work on metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) maintain that use of metaphors is a way to comprehend one concept in terms of another. A metaphor exemplifies a similarity between two different concepts or objects, and through the comparison, a new understanding may result because of the associated meaning (McQuarrie & Mick, 1996). The comparison, through analogy, states that one object is figuratively like the other object, even though the two are literally very different (Stern, 1990). In the end, the two concepts compared become better understood (Phillips, 1997). For example,

common metaphors may involve comparing the heart to a pump or the human circulatory system to a house's plumbing.

Good metaphors engage new ideas in thought and allow people to see the world with fresh eyes. Several researchers, including Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Lakoff (1993), Marshak (1993; 2000; 2004), and Chia (1996) contend that metaphors are not about language. Instead, metaphors allow for the mental conceptualization of concepts and ideas with one another.

Metaphor in Organizations

In thinking abstract ideas such as leadership, empowerment, or organizational values, it is often necessary to conceptualize and describe them in terms of another, more familiar concept. Such imagery can help to highlight abstract concepts, ideas, and beliefs so that information may be shared and used to help align organizational perceptions, knowledge, and meaning (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Sometimes in organizations, employees may lean on visual descriptions or visual metaphors to help articulate the meaning of a concept. These symbols and signs can serve as communication devices carrying information (Armenakis et al., 1995). Morgan (1998) explains that organizational metaphors are used to understand or clarify organizational experiences in terms of another. Again, metaphors help to make sense of ambiguous situations and, when used, provide a vehicle to create shared meaning and sense making.

Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) research establishes that metaphors occur within organizations at different hierarchal levels and that culture does influence how people at different hierarchal levels think, act, and behave. Their research reveals that metaphor use impacts the way individuals think and act; in fact, they think in terms of metaphors: "It is by means of conceptualizing our experiences in this manner that we pick out the 'important' aspects of an experience. And by picking out what is 'important' in the experience, we can categorize the experience, understand it, and remember it" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 83). For example, "The concept of love . . . is structured mostly in metaphorical terms: LOVE IS A JOURNEY, LOVE IS A PATIENT, LOVE IS A PHYSICAL FORCE, LOVE IS MADNESS, LOVE IS WAR, etc." (p. 85). Lakoff and Johnson state that "metaphor plays an essential role in characterizing the structure of the experience" (p. 118), and when metaphors are especially imaginative, they may even offer "a new understanding of our experience. Thus they can give us new meaning to our pasts, to our daily activity, and to what we know and believe" (p. 139).

The meaning of a metaphor varies from person to person, depending on prior individual experiences. Thus, meaning may vary from person to person, organization to organization, or culture to culture–even from one subgroup of an organization to another subgroup. In the present study, therefore, the main objective is to see whether organizational members would assign similar or dissimilar meanings to the images and metaphors of leadership, given their common organizational culture yet their different

positions in the company's hierarchy (i.e., managerial vs. nonmanagerial) (Schein, 1995).

Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) work is especially interesting because it shows the power of metaphors in interpreting and unearthing attitudes, beliefs, and culture. But just as important is their claim that metaphors not only shape and reshape experiences but also influence future thoughts and actions in that they "can have a feedback effect, guiding our future actions in accordance with the metaphor" (p. 142). This feedback (or, perhaps more accurately, "feed-forward") effect is especially of interest in the present study because it is anticipated that the results of activities such as that used in this study can have implications for planned LSOC initiatives, in other words, for the direction and future of the organization.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain how metaphors help shape the future:

> New metaphors have the power to create a new reality. This can begin to happen when we start to comprehend our experience in terms of a metaphor, and it becomes a deeper reality when we begin to act in terms of it. . . . [However] it is reasonable enough to assume that words alone don't change reality. But changes in our conceptual system do change what is real for us and affect how we perceive the world and act upon those perceptions. (p. 145-146)

Those with the power to define are the ones who shape reality. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state, "People in power get to impose their metaphors" (p. 157). Hence, focusing on managers and their leadership becomes particularly important in organizational research because new metaphors have the power to create a new reality; they influence how people structure experience.

In the 1980s, Morgan et al. (1983) investigated organizational symbolism, and Morgan (1998) recognized metaphors that have been used to describe knowledge of organizations metaphorically to resemble machines, organisms, and brains. Earlier, Norton (1989) studied the use of metaphors to manage with the organizational challenges and to help them find meaning and reason. She found that metaphors existed and were operational among organizational members for shared meaning making. Thus, in the end, metaphors are used to organize cognitive and affective domains of thinking to help create share meaning. Metaphors are windows into understanding what may not be obvious or easily articulated. They work because, when elicited spontaneously, they can reveal an individual's subconscious impressions, beliefs, and attitudes–how he/she perceives his/her reality. Symbols and metaphors can effectively serve as primers for cognitive and behavioral change (Armenakis et al., 1996). For this reason, in organizations, metaphors and visuals help reveal and assist shared meaning across contexts and job levels (Schein, 1995).

Chia (1996) further supports the idea that metaphors help people communicate difficult and intimate concepts because metaphors do not have linguistic limitations. Metaphors are also used to express mental states such as frustration, trepidation, or optimism (Siegelman, 1990). Metaphors such as "the bleeding patient" have been used to describe an organization or group that is going through difficult times; with just one metaphorical image, the seriousness of the situation can be dramatically emphasized (Sackmann, 1989). Or a metaphor can be used to suggest subtly a person's opinion on an issue. For example, a manager terminating a highly visible

employee might metaphorically refer to the person as a "sacrificial lamb," thereby conveying empathy with the person let go and at the same time sympathy for the manager who is forced to fire the employee. Ortony (2001) goes one step further by claiming that metaphors are essential in organizational communication by allowing communication to occur on several levels, thus aiding expressions of ambiguous, unknown concepts. Along with the concepts, however, emotions are also communicated, according to Inns and Jones (1996), and the emotions associated with the concepts help to create a better-understood meaning of the metaphors shared. Thus, as in the present study, when participants create images to convey their concepts of leadership, they are also conveying their emotions and perceptions at that specific time. This is particularly important in that some leaders, managers, and employees lack the linguistic prowess needed to communicate the complex feelings that metaphors, including visual ones, can convey.

Driscoll (2000) suggests that the cognitive aspect of using metaphors serves as conceptual maps that filter our perceptions during communication. These perceptions of the concept can then be used to influence organizational culture members' interpretation and thus help make sense and meaning of the cultures. She further explains that metaphors help members understand organizational situations in their environment, thus assisting employees make meaning about the messages they are communicating. For metaphors to help with the meaning-making process, Gibbs (1992) provides support for the idea that metaphors may even facilitate long-term memory.

In the end, the use of metaphors to help create, assist, and/or maintain shared meaning and sense making can also reveal shared meaning in an organization's culture and be used to influence the perception and interpretation of a subject or concept. These cultural metaphors can assist with influencing organizational decisions, behavior, and change. We can find out more about a person's beliefs by what is communicated symbolically through metaphors. Morgan et al., (1983) state that people's explanations of concepts help to symbolize unconscious and conscious concerns about themselves and their work environment. Metaphors are a vehicle for expressing truths that would never be shared face to face, thus providing a sort of shadow behind which to hide (Schein, 1995). However, this shadow is actually illuminating because it reveals much more than what the speaker believes he/she is hiding.

Research supports this notion that metaphors, *when elicited spontaneously*, can reveal an individual's subconscious impressions, beliefs, and attitudes–how they perceive their reality. Also, the symbols (visual and verbal) and metaphors can serve effectively as primers for cognitive and behavioral change (Armenakis et al., 1996). Research also supports the notion that metaphors can reveal information about an organization's groups and subgroups. For instance, shared work groups explain work as a metaphor; it becomes a frame of reference for explaining and understanding work issues (Norton, 1989), for example, using a fish metaphor to explain work life–"Work life here is like fish in a sea"–and, much as in the present study, analyzing how participants extended the metaphor and shaped it to reflect their attitudes about work

in their group or organization. By understanding the shared metaphors that reflect organizational shared meaning, researchers begin to understand the culture and have useful information for planning their LSOC interventions.

Not only do metaphors reveal the individual and group meanings of the unconscious processes in an organization, but also, analyzing organizational metaphors helps in understanding the unconscious meanings, motives, and underlying behavior (Barry, 1994). This knowledge is particularly useful to organizational development practitioners who need to understand the organization and thus support methods to improve it with LSOC initiatives. For, as Barry explains, most of the problems encountered in organizations are rooted in the "repressed, unconscious material in organizational life" (p. 37). Therefore, when instructional technologies, HR, and OD practitioners embark on creating LSOC initiatives and interventions, they must surface the unconscious meanings and beliefs held in the organization so that their improvements have long-term effects (Barry, 1994). Gaining insight into the unconscious meanings is difficult, but it can be done through metaphors and visual symbols used within the organization, much like the spontaneous drawings used in this study.

Beyond that, however, they also have implications for influencing how people think in the future and, therefore, can be effective in shaping as well as reflecting culture. Operating metaphors are useful in that they define relationships between employees and the organizational mission through cultural concepts, such as family

and team (Furman, 1998). In short, metaphors, used verbally, can be persuasive rhetorical devices (Black, 1993).

Metaphors Used for Shared Meaning and Meaning Making

The literature presented in this section explains what the research states with regard to using metaphors to more fully understand a group's and subgroup's shared meaning. Grant and Oswick (1996) state that "meaningful metaphors have attracted only very limited attention in the organizational theory literature" (p. 218).

As revealed in this study, using a metaphor in training sessions evokes a readily available number of words and images common enough to set a framework for what people otherwise try to express in an abstract way. Furthermore, metaphors are especially effective in helping isolate or elicit issues without pointing fingers at one project, group, or individual. Metaphor use can influence change because metaphors evoke higher-order feelings of mutual understanding and meaning within the organization, and this mutual understanding leads more easily and directly to organizational transformation (Illes & Ritchie, 1999).

This section does not address the research based on metaphorical analysis methods used to understand culture; rather, it reviews the research that supports the use of metaphors as a way of revealing organizational participants' perceptions. It also looks at how the research helps create a sound basis for creating and implementing change initiatives by using metaphorical meaning-making activities.

As HRD, OD, ID, and technology professionals become increasingly involved in LSOC efforts, it is important to note that making sense of how the organization makes sense of things is an important part of their role (Howard, 1994). First, the metaphors of members of organizational and subgroup cultures may provide highly informative data about the organization and subgroup cultures, as well as, if not better than, other sources of data, such as questionnaires and surveys (Schein, 1996). This is one data point that may be widely available to these practitioners as they support LSOC initiatives. Discovering these metaphors, organizational practitioners are able to see into the organization to gather data and develop insights about organizational phenomena and thus culture (Grant & Oswick, 1996).

Kets de Vries (1995) suggests a simple method for discovering these metaphors: just ask employees for metaphors that they think describe the organization and then pass these along to organizational practitioners so that they may ascertain information about the organization's culture. But for organizational practitioners to learn more about the organization's meaning of concepts, further research into the organizational myths, rituals, and symbols is needed (Cleary & Packard, 1992), and it is important for organizational practitioners to take notice of the hidden meanings in organizational metaphors. Focus on the use of metaphors in organizational analysis is increasing because organizations are difficult to diagnose and understand. Most of the time the findings derived from other organizational diagnoses are not easily understandable (Chia, 1996). Chia states that "metaphors are deemed to be useful linguistic handles which afford different ways of perceiving the world and hence have

the capacity to provide new insights not previously possible" (pp. 134-135). Metaphor analysis helps to understand organizational group and subgroup members and how they infer and make meaning of the organization or culture. The analysis also helps to understand the assumptions that affect organizational behavior. Furthermore, metaphors can be used to diagnose cultural assumptions, beliefs, and shared meaning to further understand the organizations culture and its perceptions (Cleary & Packard, 1992). It is important to recognize that the metaphors people use reveal the cultural and shared meanings that influence the perceptions and interpretations among an organization's members. Knowing these perceptions and interpretations helps organizational researchers understand the impetus for organizational decisions and behavior. Thus, knowing these supports the potential change designed for LSOC initiatives and helps practitioners be more in tune with the organizational members. All of this helps to bring the organizational hidden meanings into the forefront in an effort to change and support the effectiveness of the organization with change interventions.

However, gaining access into these organizations may be difficult. But as HR, training, and organizational professionals already have access to learning interventions, they are closer to making the invisible, unconscious meanings in organizations visible by capturing the metaphors used within their learning contexts. If they are able to capture the signs and symbols used in the meaning-making metaphorical process, then they have more potential to expose the group, subgroup, and/or organization-wide unconscious content and meaning.

For example, one study revealed that when describing team dynamics, the metaphors used reflected the actual group dynamics observed by the researchers (Smircich, 1983). But another study found a divide between management and nonmanagement groups when metaphors were used to examine the extent of shared meaning. However, the study also resulted in revealing the causes and dynamics of the groups' conflict (Smith & Eisenberg, 1987).

In contrast to research aimed at how metaphors help to reveal information about a company's culture, other types of data collection do not allow for the same depth of complexity and insight into the group and subgroup cultures. Quantitative methods do not allow for deep descriptions about the organization, including how it makes meaning of concepts (Schein, 1996). This lack of empirical research supporting the study of metaphors and organizational behavior (Grant & Oswick, 1996) suggests that more research is required to understand the rhetorical, symbolic, and metaphorical discourse used in organizations so IT and HRD practitioners can further understand the shared meanings of employees (Grant & Oswick, 1996; Schein, 1996).

Leaders need the ability to envision, capture, express, and communicate thoughts so that they can share and develop the mental models held by others in their organization (Dealtry, 2004; Schein, 1995). Schein (1992) emphasizes that a critical aspect of organizational leadership is language: "Habits of thinking, mental models, and/or linguistic paradigms: the shared cognitive frames that guide the perceptions, thought, and language used by the members of a group and [which] are taught to new

members in the early socialization process" (p. 9). Symbols, signs, and metaphors are a representation of a group's mental model, which guides their thoughts and actions and thus their language.

Meaning and Context in Organizations

Little research exists about the meaning-making and sense-making processes within organizations (Morgan, 1998; Schein, 1996; Weick, 1995). Frost and Morgan (1998) explain that when people make sense of things, they infer into the dialogue to make subjective meanings. For example, Duimering and Safayeni (1998) discovered in their study that there was company-wide confusion among organizational members about the meaning of *team* and about the kinds of actions that might be appropriate within the context of a team program. Therefore, they concluded that in order to implement a company-wide team program, they had to create a process of image construction and maintenance so that organizational members understood the team concept from the start.

Meaning, however, ultimately depends on the act of interpretation as done by a particular person in a given moment within a given context (Botan & Soto, 1998). Context is therefore highly important to meaning making, and Trice and Beyer (1993) emphasize that the meaning of a symbol is context-specific. The meaning of a symbol is created in the context of the organizational culture, which tends to define and guide members' perceptions and behavior (Schein, 1985, 1992; Trice & Beyer, 1993). Because context includes time and place, organizational symbols may have different

meanings in different organizations or subgroups at a different place or time (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997).

Duimering and Safayeni (1998) further explain that buzzwords, such as *team,* become legitimized as a part of the organization, but they inherit some ambiguity by virtue of language. This ambiguity can be important, however, because it provides some flexibility in definition, which makes the term more operational insofar as people can adapt it so that it makes sense in their own work environment. Flexibility and ambiguity become essential when a team program needs to be applied organization-wide, thus allowing for the adaptability to local, subgroup constraints.

Use of Metaphors in Leadership

The ability for managers and leaders to create meaningful symbolic representations requires creative thinking and interpersonal skills. Recognizing organizational behavior and representing a situation metaphorically is a must-have manager capability (Dealtry, 2004; Morgan, 1998, Schein, 1996). The literature in this area needs to expand by providing more guidelines, support, and training to allow for managers and leaders to acquire this must-have capability.

Reviewing the metaphorical uses of two different groups within an organization can heighten awareness of the various views that each groups holds. Highly ranked groups, such as management, are more responsible for maintaining the organization's meanings because they are positioned to have more power and control within the organization (Alderfer, 1987). However, as Alderfer also explains, the

lower rank groups make up most of the workforce. Therefore, the LSOC initiatives may be better received when senior leaders target their messages (and metaphors) in one direction or another, rather than attempting a "one size fits all" approach in communication.

Morgan et al. (1983) further recommend that leaders create symbolic references to actions, events, and images, for unless they do so, they may, without knowing it, create metaphors that do not assist in shared understanding for ambiguous situations. Coincidently enough, Vaill (1991) describes ambiguous situations as "permanent whitewater," much like the metaphors used in this study. Carefully crafted metaphorical references reveal assumptions and meanings so that members have a means to understand themselves and each other. They use metaphors to express the deeper meaning of ambiguous or uncertain situations occurring within the organization.

Furthermore, organizational literature also suggests exploring metaphor as the meaning-making device for leaders within the organization. The use of metaphorical language allows leaders to think visually and communicate to their organization (Morgan, 1998; Ortony, 1993; Oswick et al., 2002). Schein (1992) also agrees that leaders ought to share their perspective about the organizational culture by using metaphors to frame what is happening in the organization's groups, and subgroups. Marshak (1993) implies that by changing rhetoric, leaders can change reality simply by changing, assisting, and/or controlling metaphors, rhetoric, and images.

Leaders use metaphor to reveal their understanding and to persuade others into their view of reality. Leaders and managers have the clout to lead organizations by using symbols, meanings, and images aligned with their organizational culture (Hatch, 1997). Using metaphors and symbols assists in linking abstract concepts and ideas to concrete meanings so as to help organizational members link the known with the unknown during times of organizational change (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Ortony, 1993).

Research into Metaphor Use in Organizations

Organizational studies have increasingly focused on metaphor use in organizations as a method to create opportunities for LSOC activities (Putnam, Phillips, & Chapman, 1999). However, there has been little research investigating the use of metaphor by leadership (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Although Schein (1992) explains how leaders use language to communicate cultural ideals to persuade the organization they lead, they do not consider metaphors as part of that communication. In the context of leaders and managers who lead and manage change, there is a significant relationship between a manager's underlying metaphors and how the manager conceptualizes that reality, especially from where he or she manages his or her part of the organization.

In organizational studies, Morgan (1998) has grouped organizational metaphors to include those of the machine, the organism, and the political system, to name a few. Morgan contends that images and metaphors are central to shaping the

development of organizational studies. Yet few studies have examined how a given metaphor can be used to reveal organizational members' perceptions of and attitudes toward the organization. A notable exception, in a study similar to the present one, is the Oswick and Montgomery (1999) study, in which they used metaphors to examine management's conception of their company by asking them to compare it to an animal or car.

In this relatively new area of research involving organizational rhetoric and discourse, there is a need for more empirical studies involving metaphor and meaning analysis (Grant & Oswick, 1996; Marshak, Keenoy, Oswick, & Grant et al., 2000). Marshak et al. (2000) call for more studies that explore the meanings ascribed to different organizational discourse. The study described in the remaining part of this chapter is one attempt to help fill that research need.

Supporting Research Studies

As support for my chosen research methodologies, which are explained in Chapter 3, a number of research studies similar in concept have used qualitative techniques, such as questionnaires, semistructured interviews, media analysis, and content analysis of transcribed scripts (Alvesson, 1998; Armenakis et al., 1995; Dunegan, 2003; Eckhardt & Houston, 2002; Hirschman, 2003; Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997; Preston, 1993). Most of the studies reviewed, however, do not fully resemble the approach used in the present study. For example, the content and semiotic analysis

studies were conducted mostly as investigations of media in the advertising and communication fields.

More similar to the present study are organizational symbolism studies. One study by Eckhardt and Houston (2002) sought to discover hidden cultural meanings by asking participants how they would respond to given scenarios and then analyzing their responses. By using iterative coding of the data, they discovered common meanings in the responses by allowing emerging categories and themes to appear–a procedure also recommended by Phillips (1997). Studies by Clarke, Kell, Schmidt, and Vignali (2000) and Hirschman (2003) further corroborate the value of semiotic and textual analysis as a means of exploring the interactions among the organization, the individual, the symbols, and the symbols' meanings in order to more fully understand culture, meaning, and the sense-making of ideas.

One of the most ambitious of qualitative studies has been Alvesson's (1998) study, which methodologically consists of the following data collection techniques: 30 semistructured interviews, unstructured interviews, participant observation, transcribed interviewed scripts, questionnaires, and observed artifacts. Pratt and Rafaeli (1997) and Dunegan (2003) report studies in which they used an inductive analysis of qualitative data. In Pratt and Rafaeli's study, transcribed meetings, unstructured observations, and interviews, were used to transition back and forth between the data and theoretical arguments. In Dunegan's study, the data was collected by means of a questionnaire, and the researcher scanned the data in search of dominant themes and then brainstormed alternative conceptual frameworks for

relating the themes to one another. For example, the theoretical framework of organizational identity and organizational symbolism was identified. In reviewing all of the data, Dunegan discovered 10 dominant meanings that appeared in most or all data sources, thus creating clusters or subgroupings.

In Helms and Stern's (2001) study, the data was collected by a questionnaire in order to assess organizational culture. The questionnaire contained 42 statements for assessing the norms of behavior within an organization. As Berger (2000) states, however, a disadvantage of questionnaires is that people may misinterpret the questions; also, survey questions are difficult to write.

Unlike this study, in the research design in Eckhardt and Houston's (2002) study, they provided scripts to their population and asked for responses, then looked for common, hidden cultural meanings within the text. Anything that was specific was used in an iterative coding of the data, which allowed for emerging themes and which refined the themes based on existing literature.

One of the limitations of the studies mentioned above is that the questionnaires and semistructured interviews used to collect data relied heavily on the participants' ability to articulate. This is a potential problem in that participants may struggle to verbally explain concepts that are abstract and difficult to articulate (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Also, allowing participants free rein with their explanations encourages a wide variety of perceptions, explanations, examples, and signs to emerge. Furthermore, a plethora of explanations with no guiding framework may provide data that are difficult to manage and analyze. For these reasons, the present study uses a guiding

metaphorical framework to collect data. My research indicates that thus far, no study has done so, although there is one image-based study that used seven-year-old participants to draw a story about a person who drops a bag of drugs. Their images were used as a way of depicting the seven-year-olds' ideas of what makes children healthy, and the findings were aimed at efforts to design and develop a better health education curriculum (Kearney & Hyle, 2004). One of the limitations of this study, however, was its use of complex concepts, because the more complex the concepts, the more ambiguous the meanings of the drawings become. Using a metaphor, as this study does, is one way of guiding the activity, directing the meaning making, and simplifying the data collection and analysis.

Of all the studies mentioned, none has included the metaphor technique to elicit participants' perceptions, and only one study mentioned has used the drawing technique to elicit both verbal and written impressions from its subjects. In this study, drawings seemed a natural technique for these participants. Drawing exercises, such as diagramming on a flipchart or whiteboards in a meeting rooms or classrooms, is often used as means of expression and communication in organizations. Managers or team members often draw complex or abstract ideas with signs, symbols, and other visual images to represent meanings. These pictures can serve as a catalyst for "getting everyone on the same page." In addition, using a framework or metaphor to guide the activity of drawing out what an organization and its leadership look like helps to structure the activity and create shared meaning. In the case of this study, the

metaphor framework helped to keep all groups on the same theme and allowed them to use common language to express their understanding.

Conclusion

In my exploration of a research topic, I found that the conceptual and theoretical framework is well established from the innovation and diffusion-of-innovation standpoint. However, further exploration is in order to decide what questions still need to be asked or whether the topic is ready for the next level of questions, moving beyond understanding the phenomenon and suggesting prescriptive models for effective results. It is evident that studies have spent a majority of time identifying the factors that enhance or inhibit effective implementation, studies such as Dahmer's (1994).

Arnold (1996) suggests that human resource development practitioners are the ones most qualified to serve their business functions with changing culture and adoption of innovations, and I agree. It behooves instructional designers, training managers, and instructional technologists who work within the HRD function to further explore models and studies that may guide effective meaning making and adoption of change. As an instructional designer, I find myself becoming more involved in implementing interventions beyond the individual level and with groups in training sessions.

Therefore, more research, much like this study, is needed to support these important matters. It is clear that there are connections and disconnects in the

literature that have not provided the necessary guidelines for both leaders and practioners who support change efforts. This study can make space for more contributions to the four theoretical constructs presented and how they can support each other in the areas where they may have connections and, more importantly, disconnects. Thereby, the outcomes of this study and the way the literature is pulled together supports the improvements to the literature in IT. Chapter 5 makes more recommendations in this area and provides more emphasis on new approaches to benefit the literature and practice in IT.

As a result, because of that experience and with the theoretic framework established in this chapter, I now turn to a description of the study itself, its methodology, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methods utilized to address the key question guiding this study and to answer the research subquestions. This chapter concentrates on inductive qualitative methods, including content analysis and semiotic analysis, as a multimethodological approach to studying meaning. The following sections describe my role as the researcher and the study's approach, research questions, setting, participants, data collection procedure, types of data, coding processes, and data analysis.

Making Meaning of Meanings

In this chapter, it is important to note my intentions, as this project's author and researcher, as I am, in effect, making meaning out of the participants' meaning-making process. Thus, for those who may wonder as they read this chapter and especially Chapter 4, Findings, *Whose* meanings are these?, I wish to emphasize the following:

a. The facilitator of the sessions did not tell or hint at what metaphors the participants should or should not think about, neither did he ascribe meaning to or in

any way critique, evaluate, or reject the participants' renderings of images and concepts, either verbal or visual;

b. As an observer/researcher, I did not interject or intervene in these sessions but simply recorded the sessions as faithfully as possible; and

c. In reporting my findings in the following chapter, the meanings ascribed to icons and images are strictly those of the participants, as I understood those meanings as they were explained by the participants and from my data analysis. Thus, any references in this and particularly in the subsequent chapter as to what an icon or image means should not be construed as my interpretation or my meaning of their meanings but, insofar as possible in any similar research, as a faithful representation of the participants' images and words themselves.

As for the meanings I have derived from these sessions and for my impressions of the value of using metaphors in instructional training and beyond, those conclusions, speculations, and recommendations are contained in the final chapter, Chapter 5.

Purpose of the Study

First, as mentioned in Chapter 1, it is important to note that the aim of this research project was not to assess the organizational culture, propose change initiatives, or intervene in the training sessions in any way. Rather, it was to examine the efficacy of using metaphor in instructional training sessions as a way of revealing the participants' perceptions of the organization and its leadership. Metaphors are

useful because they shed light on concepts that may not be obvious or easily articulated. When elicited spontaneously, metaphors can reveal individuals' impressions, beliefs, and attitudes–how they perceive their reality or culture.

Using the initial metaphor of a stream, the facilitator posed a broad question: *What do your organization and its leadership look like?* By allowing participants free rein in their thinking, talking, and drawing, they were able to plumb their subconscious and dredge up specific images. By then asking them what those images meant to them, the facilitator helped unearth a wealth of associated meanings and concepts related to the company's organization and leadership.

My Dual Role as Researcher and Practitioner

As a senior manager involved in human resources, learning, and organizational projects at the corporation that serves as the site of this research study, as well as a graduate student of instructional technology, I considered myself an active scholar-practitioner in the field I was studying. My professional experience in learning and development encouraged me to seek additional scholarship in this area of study. Also, I was a previous participant in the learning activity that was the focus of this study prior to deciding to use this activity for the context of my study. As a result, this gave me insider information from an ethnographic perspective. I was fortunate enough to be both an organizational "insider" and an organizational "outsider." As a scholar outsider, I was interested in discovering knowledge that could be applied to other situations.

As an instructional designer and manager of designing instructional learning systems, I was quite interested in examining the efficacy of using metaphor in training sessions as a way of tapping into the participants' perceptions of the organization's existing cultural climate. In addition, I was also interested in investigating how instructional training can use metaphors to create shared meaning and how such data might be used to lay the groundwork for larger organizational initiatives. As practitioner and scholar, I wanted to know what worked and how and why it worked so that such knowledge and approaches could be transferable to other similar situations.

Overview

I begin this chapter by explaining the methodological approaches used in this study and the rationale for their selection: namely, the appropriateness of using a mixed methodology of a qualitative, microethnographic content and semiotic analysis to study meaning, all of which are explained later in this chapter. I then describe the study itself, including the research site, participants, learning activity (the stream activity), and the questions that guided my research. Next, I describe the types of data I collected, my procedure for collecting that data, and the methods I used to analyze and understand the various forms of data. The chapter closes by introducing the main conceptual categories that resulted from the data analyses and that are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Research Methods

Using organizational symbols and metaphors in instructional training sessions is not new. However, examination of such techniques has been commonly based on simply anecdotal evidence collected through intuitive or observational research methods (Phillips, 2001). Typically, research practitioners have observed and interpreted symbolic activity in organizations (Phillips, 1997; Trice & Beyer, 1993). By contrast, in this research study, an inductive, qualitative microethnographic approach to studying meaning was used, specifically, the subjects' perceptions of their organization and its leadership as revealed through metaphor-based activities. Furthermore, this rapid, microethnographic content and semiotic analysis method is also appropriate for examining how metaphors can be incorporated into instructional training and how shared meaning can be achieved, which can later be used to lay the groundwork for future organizational change initiatives (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Qualitative Research

According to Shank (2006), qualitative research is a systematic inquiry into meaning, that is how people make sense of their lives, their experiences, and their place in the world. In qualitative research, the researcher himself/herself typically becomes the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Instead of collecting data through questionnaires or machines (Creswell, 1994; Shank, 2006), the researcher depends on qualitative methods for the naturalistic inquiry into meaning, which, in this

study in particular, lends itself to using microethnographic, content, and semiotic means for analysis.

Qualitative Research and Content Analysis

The qualitative, rapid ethnographic approach may be used to study the signs in texts to articulate meaning within a given context. In this study, my goal was to look for the descriptions of meaning presented by the participants, particularly meanings that are often taken for granted or that are used to explain others' understandings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Wax (1971) notes that an ethnographic researcher understands shared meaning as an approach to exploring and explaining the culture itself. As an organizational insider, I had inside knowledge of the organization, its businesses, challenges, successes, and so forth. This aided me from the microethnographic approach and positioned me to elicit more insightful conclusions and understandings of the data I collected.

In order to depict the meaning of *leadership,* I used content and semiotic techniques for studying the sign systems used in the training activity and for studying how the participants interpreted their meaning and engaged in sense making. As I did so, the method led to insights about what signs and symbols the organization might use to articulate the behavior of leadership and, in turn, to suggestions of how to incorporate these signs and symbols into future LSOC initiatives as a means of supporting, influencing, or changing the organizational culture which are presented in Chapter 5.

The content and semiotic analysis approach was suggested by Leiss, Kline, and Jhally (1990) as a means to overcome the weaknesses of semiotics when issues of reliability, sample size, and generalizability were concerned. For instance, Leiss et al. explain the value of using semiotic analysis to explore interactions between the organization and individual. Furthermore, Arnold et al. (2001) state that there is a precedent for the conduct of semiotic analysis of data without using triangulation.

Altheide (1996) makes the connection between qualitative research and content analysis, stating that "The goal of qualitative research is to understand the process and character of social life and to arrive at meaning and process; we seek to understand types, characteristics, and organizational aspects of the documents as social products in their own right, as well as what they claim to represent" (p. 42). Altheide explains that content and qualitative analysis is a blend of the traditional notion of objective content analysis but with participant observation to form ethnographic content analysis. Using documents to study culture means studying the array of objects, symbols, and meanings that make up social reality as shaped and shared by members of a society or group.

Documents, according to Altheide (1996), "can be defined as any symbolic representation that can be recorded or retrieved for analysis" (p. 2). Because culture is difficult to study, it is important to study its most significant features, which are often subtle, taken for granted, and enacted in everyday life routines. Consequently, qualitative document analysis relies a good deal on text, narrative, and descriptions, and for this reason, protocols for qualitative document analysis tend to be less precise

and short (Altheide, 1996). To overcome these limitations in part, the present study uses three types of data sets to answer the research questions: the participants' drawings, their verbal explanations of them, and my written observations.

Next, I address the appropriateness of microethnographic design and its relation to the content and semiotic analysis.

Content Analysis

First, "Content analysis as a methodology is often used in conjunction with other methods, in particular historical and ethnographic research" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p. 406). In qualitative media analysis, content and qualitative analysis blends the traditional notion of objective content analysis with participant observation to form ethnographic content analysis (Altheide, 1996). "Ethnographic content analysis is also oriented to documenting and understanding the communication of meaning as well as verifying theoretical relationships" (Altheide, 1996, p. 16). As with all ethnographic research, the meaning of a message is assumed to be reflected in various modes of information exchange, format, rhythm, and style, for example, the aural and visual as well as the contextual nuances of the text itself (Altheide, 1996).

Microethnography

In this study, a modified ethnographic approach called *microethnography* was used. Shank (2006) states that microethnography occupies the "middle ground between a limited case study on one hand and a full-blown ethnography on the other hand" (p. 63). As with ethnographic methods, microethnographic research is suitable for observing the activities and behaviors of groups as a unit (e.g., a class) (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). The goal is to capture as complete an understanding as possible of a particular situation. This, however, can pose challenges because one of the main limitations of ethnographic research is that it is highly dependent on the particular researcher's observations. Also, because "numerical data are rarely provided, there is usually no way to check validity of the researcher's conclusions" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p. 455).

Shank (2006) contends that this is not a shortcoming but rather is simply the nature of qualitative research and that it must be therefore understood that there will never be a complete, objective understanding of the topic under study. Indeed, he purports that no understanding is ever complete and that we embark upon metaphorical understanding not because our understanding is wrong but because it is incomplete. Similarly, the present study recognizes that although the data may give us a better understanding of the participants' meanings of *leadership*, that understanding, although richer, is still incomplete (Shank, 2006).

Ethnographic Content Analysis

Ethnographic content analysis is oriented more toward concept development, data collection, and emergent data analysis than it is to theory building. Unlike, for example, Strauss and Corbin's (1998) "grounded theory," which attempts to generate clear, testable hypotheses as a foundation for "theory," ethnographic content analysis is more comfortable with clear descriptions and definitions that are compatible with the material being studied. Thus, as a sociological approach, ethnomethodololgy forsakes the usual theory-building path for developing descriptions of human behavior in a topical fashion (Altheide, 1996; Lindlof, 1995). Central to both grounded theory and ethnomethodology, however, is constant comparison, contrast, and rhetorical sampling (Altheide, 1996).

There are five stages for ethnographic content analysis: (1) protocol development, (2) data collection, (3) coding and organization, (4) data analysis, and (5) reporting (Altheide, 1996). These methods were partially combined with Strauss and Corbin's (1998) qualitative approach for theoretical sampling and comparisons through open coding, which is explained later in this chapter.

Ethnography does not imply any single method or type of data analysis, although participant observation is a strategy that nearly all ethnographers employ (Lindlof, 1995). Not only was I the primary instrument for data gathering, but also, as an organizational researcher, I relied on interpretive models to make sense of that data.

Semiotic Analysis

Shank (2006) explains that "the least prevalent, but in some ways the most powerful, framework of data gathering for qualitative research is grounded on semiotic theory or semiotics" (p. 136). *Semiotics* is the general science of signs. Semiotic research is about learning to discover and use such sign systems (Shank, 2006). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) explain that ethnographic studies, especially those involving semiotics, are often used to describe culture or aspects of culture. Semiotic fieldwork "is associated with the emergence of sociology as a search for understanding of societies and social worlds . . . and seeks to build up arguments from individual observations patterned by group relations or culture" (Manning, 1987, p. 9). Manning also describes semiotic study "as a naturalistic detailed description of a culture [which seeks] to . . . symbolize it in diverse modes (verbal, nonverbal, material, and written)" (p. 21).

Additionally, qualitative studies involving symbolic interactionism study how the self and the social environment mutually define and shape each other through symbolic communication. Peirce's (cited in Buchler, 1940) model of semiotics is tied directly to his fundamental work in the philosophical school known as *pragmaticism.* The concepts of interactionism originated in the philosophy of pragmaticism, and despite diverse treatments of pragmaticism, Peirce was the first to introduce the theory of meaning and tie it to our concrete practices in the world (Shank, 2006). Thus, the meaning of a concept, Peirce contends, is found in signs of the presence or absence of

the concept in the world. Accordingly, Shank (2006) maintains that we need to reason from those signs to their associated meanings.

Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940) describes meaning as evoked in practical consequences. Thus, it is only by the use of terms in concrete situations that we can identify differences of meaning between two terms (or between two people using the same term). When people use terms differently (or use different terms for the same concepts), it is because they have different procedures for anticipating and orienting to the social world. Semiotic theory, as developed by Peirce, laid the groundwork for our consideration of *significations* as a social process (Lindlof, 1995). The coding systems of signs and symbols applied in this study are influenced by Peirce and are explained further in Chapter 4.

Description of the Study

The Organization and Its Training Program

The setting for this research study was the Learning and Development, Management and Leadership Development (MLD) organization within a publicly held healthcare company located in the midwestern United States. In 2003, the MLD organization implemented a corporate training program called the New Leader Program, designed for middle managers from within the company. The program consists of five to seven classes designed for new and existing managers. These classes include a number of activities built upon each other and that cover topics such

as coaching, situational leadership, employee relations, and human resource policies. This research study focuses on one of these training sessions that involve an activity that is called "the stream activity."

This training session uses a video to introduce the metaphor of a stream, and then a facilitator has the course participants elaborate on that metaphor in order to reflect upon and create shared meanings of how they, the participants, perceive the organization and its leadership. The metaphor helps trigger their conceptions of leadership by helping individuals articulate what leadership "looks like," both visually and verbally.

If this activity were implemented every time the class is offered worldwide, then about 1,300 managers would be able, since its inception, to participate in the stream activity. That means 1,300 employees would be conceptualizing, through their drawings and explanations based on the stream metaphor, what they think their organization and its leadership look like–the objective of this particular activity. Unfortunately, however, the data that could be gleaned from this activity have never been collected, and neither have the outcomes of this training activity been used for organizational purposes. As a participant in the leadership program, I considered this a missed opportunity, for it occurred to me that if IT and HRD professionals could leverage the data that managers used in the stream activity to explain what is happening within their organization, then this shared meaning could help lay the groundwork for loftier initiatives, such as LSOC and leadership initiatives. Hence,

this provided the impetus for my study and was probably the main reason it was considered important enough to receive company approval.

The Researcher's Experience with the Training Program

In the beginning of 2004, I was a new manager in the HRD training organization, which was primarily responsible for training initiatives for a division within the company. In the latter half of 2004, I attended the New Leader Program and participated in the stream activity. At the time of my attendance in the program, I was conducting my scholarly studies in the Doctorate of Education program at Northern Illinois University (NIU), majoring in Instructional Technologies and minoring in Organization Design. As a participant in the company's stream activity, I soon realized my interest in examining the use of metaphor as a tool for meaning making in corporate training, and I decided to conduct my study within this setting for my research dissertation. In the winter of 2005, then, and prior to seeking academic approval for the study, I conducted three observations of the stream-activity training sessions at HealthCare to help develop my written research proposal.

Research Questions

Within the training context, the stream activity has one key purpose: it seeks to establish what meanings related to the organization and its leadership are present within this particular training context and for these particular participants. Although this was also my main research question, other subquestions also guided this study.

Subquestion 1: What are the middle-manager participants' and other nonmanagerial participants' meanings of leadership?

Subquestion 2: What meanings do these participants assign to leadership-related images during the shared meaning stream activity?

Subquestion 3: How do the meanings they create relate to the organizationally acceptable meanings?

Subquestion 4: What are the implications for IT professionals designing large-scale organizational change initiatives and communications?

Approval Process

In spring of 2005, I sought approval from HealthCare to conduct my research project. Access to participants followed a number of internal protocols for approval (see Appendix A). First, a proposal was presented explaining the intentions of the study and my wish to observe employees in two different settings. I provided my career and academic background and explained with a high level of detail my research plan. I noted that the purpose of the study (as known at the time of the proposal) was to establish what we could find out about how people create shared meanings and that, as the researcher, I would do this by observing employees when they were introduced to an innovation during a training activity. The rationale, I explained, was that by knowing more about how people create shared meaning, it would be possible to reshape communications to influence change throughout the organization. For example, I speculated, the outcomes of this study could assist management teams with

LSOC efforts and provide them with valuable insights about the organizations in which they would like to implement change. Those changes could support their critical business goals and company-wide values, institute quality, or build leadership capabilities to move an organization forward.

My proposal also explained my role as the researcher, described the intended research subjects, detailed the procedure I would use for the study, and outlined the way the data would be gathered and analyzed. All of these aspects of the study as proposed, approved, and implemented are described following.

Once approvals and security clearances were granted from the company's legal staff, HR division, management, and New Leader Program sponsor and owner, I proceeded to gain access to and consent from the research participants before the research study could begin. In essence, I explained to the prospective participants that I would be observing an activity in a classroom-training program and that the observation of this activity would require me to make notes and audio recordings of the training participants' presentations. I assured them that my role was primarily that of a researcher and, as Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) suggest, I made no pretense of being a member of their group but rather an observer-as-participant. Thus, I explained that as the researcher, I would collect paper materials that they, the participants, used during the activity and I would use the data and insights gathered to answer research questions in support of my study. All the participants who were solicited signed consent forms for participating in the study.

Also, HealthCare's support continued during the entire length of the study. I encouraged HealthCare's interest and support with feedback on how the study was progressing. This helped to validate the study, as I paid close attention to keeping the sponsor and participants well informed of my progress.

Finally, I also arranged for the appropriate approvals with my graduate program and the university. To ensure that all research involving human subjects is facilitated appropriately, NIU's Human Subject Review Board reviews all such research proposals. In accordance with federal regulations and university policy, my research proposal was approved prior to the start of my study.

Research Participants

The study was designed to observe two participant groups. The first, Group A, consisted of 11 middle managers; the second, Group B, consisted of 9 nonmanagerial personnel. The employees in both groups represented a variety of functions within HealthCare. Those in Group A represented a sample of managers from the corporate training class in the New Leader Program, and therefore, they did not need to be solicited; they were observed in the training session for which they were already enrolled. The nonmanagerial personnel in Group B, however, were solicited through cooperation with managers from whom I obtained permission to contact other personnel for the purposes of this study. These managers, as explained below, selected them as participants for a special session of the stream-activity training. Because those in Group B did not have supervisory responsibilities, they were not

normally included in the company's New Leader Program. Their inclusion in this study was prompted by my own curiosity about whether or not views of the organization and its leadership would be shared by managerial and nonmanagerial personnel, for without such consensus, LSOC efforts may be hampered.

Group A: Approvals and Context

At the suggestion of the training program sponsor, I attended the training session prior to the one at which I was to observe and collect data. She introduced me as an employee of the company who was conducting a research study for completion of my graduate studies. This introduction was extremely helpful in allowing me access and acceptance within the group. Upon completing her introduction, I introduced myself, gave a short description of what the study entailed (similar for the approval mentioned above), and requested signatures for participant approvals. I received 100% participant approval. I thanked the participants and informed them that I would be attending their next class session to conduct the observation.

Two weeks later, the day of the observation, I attended the class. Prior to the beginning the activity, the facilitator asked me to reintroduce myself. Upon my introduction, I asked if there was anyone who was not present at the previous training session. A few participants raised their hands, and I gave a brief introduction of the study and myself and requested their participant signatures (see Appendix B). In all, there were 11 middle managers in Group A.

Group B: Approvals and Context

Access to Group B participants was less formal. Because the activity was going to be held independent of the usual manager training sessions, I solicited volunteers from various parts of the organization. As I had been with the company for over five years, I had contacts in numerous parts of the organization. I was looking for participants who were below the management and supervisory levels within the company. Also, I wanted the participants to be nonmanagement personnel who had limited access to senior management levels but who, like Group A, represented different areas of the business.

Solicitation for participation was conducted by requesting their involvement through their managers. I personally phoned, met, or e-mailed the managers to request support from individuals in their area. Similarly, I provided the same explanation of my background and description of the research plan. I also reassured these managers that I had the adequate approvals to conduct the study from both the company and my academic institution.

Because I was an "insider" in the company and had established credibility, it was easy to obtain the Group B participation required. Also, I knew the cultural norms for requesting support or valuable time of individuals. Nine people were able to participate in Group B. Thus, in total, 20 participants accepted and fully participated in the study.

Four weeks later, the day of the observation, I prepared for the class activity with Group B. The next sections provide a description of the physical and social

setting of the two sessions in an effort to provide context for the study, as well as a description of the activity.

Physical and Social Setting

For both Group A and Group B, the activity took place in one of HealthCare's corporate classrooms on its very large company campus. The room was set up with high-end technological equipment, good lighting, and comfortable chairs and tables. In the corner were fresh coffee and sweets. In the Group A training room were five classroom tables that each seated up to 6 participants. On the observation day for Group A, 11 participants were seated at three tables, ranging from three to five participants at each table. In the training room for Group B, participants sat at two different tables, with four participants at one table and five participants at another.

Each table was supplied with an easel and flipchart paper, including color markers for drawing. The facilitator's table was in the front of the room facing the five tables. His table had a laptop that was connected to a control panel. The control panel was connected to the LCD projector that displayed video and slide presentations. On each end of the facilitator's table were two easels with flipchart paper and colored markers. Overall, the room was very comfortable and adequate for small-group activities.

Essentially, the setting for Groups A and B were the same; however, because of the way the groups were set up, there were some differences that should be noted. In Group A, seating was not assigned, but based on my initial observations from my

first day in the classroom, the participants appeared to be sitting in the same seats in which I saw them previously. Their dress was business casual. Because this was a training event, participants took advantage of the relaxed atmosphere and appeared calm, social, and relaxed upon entering the room. Almost all participants had a beverage or food item in front of them and were engaged in social dialogue. Once the facilitator was ready to begin the activity, he gained their attention to begin and started to facilitate.

Because the Group B activity was not presented to the participants within the context of the New Leader Program, the set-up leading to the activity was orchestrated differently. First, because the participants had been asked to volunteer their time, the session was scheduled over the lunch hour so as not to interfere with their regular work duties. This was an advantageous approach in that the managers of these employees did not need to be concerned that they were away from their current job duties for long. Also, most of the participants did not know one another, so allowing lunch to be served prior to the activity allowed for the participants to engage in social dialogue and helped them become comfortable with one another. Because the participants were invited to participate in the observation activity, they seemed to take advantage of the atmosphere and appeared calm, social, and relaxed upon entering the classroom. After lunch, the facilitator started the activity by showing the video. Once the video was finished, the participants were asked to choose and join one of two different tables, each supplied with an easel and flipchart paper, including color markers for drawing.

Description of the Activity

Each session involved a 60-minute activity called the stream activity, which included warm-up questions, a video presentation, a flipchart drawing exercise, and group presentations.

Warm-Up Questions

The facilitator spent a few minutes asking the participants what words or images they associated with the stream metaphor. He asked, "What are the elements of a stream?" and he wrote their responses on a flipchart. This question served as a warm-up activity for the participants insofar as it readied the participants for the next activity by helping them associate common terms and mental constructs with the stream metaphor. Thus, when they were then asked to do their flipchart drawings and explanations of them, the participants had their own ready-made reservoir of references that could be drawn upon.

Video Segment

Following the warm-up questions the four-minute video segment, taken from the well-known Ken Blanchard Companies®, introduced the stream metaphor as a way of helping participants understand that organizations operate much like the flow of water in a stream. The Ken Blanchard Companies® have a 25-year-old reputation as being the leaders in offering management and leadership development programs. They are a global leader in workplace learning, employee productivity, and leadership

and team effectiveness. This particular activity, like many others from the Ken Blanchard Companies®, aimed at organizational awareness and learning new concepts.

The video employed a stream as a metaphor to illustrate how managers could use the leadership styles of SLII® to provide employees with the focus and attention they need during times of change. The guiding-stream metaphor worked the same as the warm-up exercise, as it provided a usable framework for the participants to articulate the meanings of leadership in an effort to create or reveal shared meaning. As used in this activity, the metaphor facilitated the participants' discussion of what leadership "looks like." However, during the activity, the icons, images, and symbols used by the participants were unique to their own experiences and were not identical to the images provided in the video.

Flipchart Drawing Exercise

After showing the video and asking free-association questions, the facilitator asked the participants to form groups of four or five and draw a composite picture on the flip chart in answer to the following: *Using the stream metaphor, draw what leadership looks like in your organization. This activity is not part of the Ken Blanchard® program, but rather is an element that the company MLD sponsors added to the training session.*

In the next five to eight minutes, the participants drew, talked, and described their perceptions of organizational leadership using the metaphorical language of a stream. During this activity, participants drew symbols, signs, icons, words, and

pictures that communicated what leadership "looks like" or how it was perceived in their organizations. Because the group was made up of people from various parts of the organization, the picture on the flip chart became a composite image of the company's leadership and, by extension, a description of the company's culture.

Group Presentations

Finally, each small group took about two to four minutes to present its drawings to the whole class, accompanied by their explanations of what their specific images signified to them. It was during the presentation that the group revealed how, through their metaphoric drawings, it came to some consensus regarding the meaning of leadership within their organization.

Data Collection Methods

This section describes the three main collection procedures used to record the data from the two stream-activity sessions: during the activity, (1) making audio recordings and (2) taking notes; and immediately after the activity, (3) reconstructing the text from my observations and notes. Although this section describes the method I used to document the data for Group A, the procedure was essentially the same for Group B; only the number in the subgroup differed.

Audiotape Recordings

Using audio recording presented some advantages and some disadvantages. Thus, before I describe my procedure in detail, I need to address the issue of why I used tape recorders and not video cameras to tape the sessions.

Rationale for Using Only Audio Recordings

During the approval process, I discovered that permissions for audio, camera, and video were quite stringent at HealthCare. Even permissions for just audio were quite extensive and rigorous, for I had to gain security clearance and approval from the company's security department and head of security. An application was required, along with an explanation of how the audio would be used. To request the use of video camera recording would have required an even higher level of security access. Although recording the activity with a video camera would have made linking images with their explanations much easier, I believed that its presence in the training room would have been too intrusive by invading the participants' privacy even more.

The advantage with only the audio recording was that it provided a greater level of anonymity, for it was difficult to link voices with specific people because the participants did not say their names. By contrast, a video camera would clearly identify who said what and violate the participants' anonymity. This was reason enough to use only the audio recorder.

In addition, the audio recorder was easy to use and less intrusive. It was easy to place on the participants' table without it being noticed and therefore it did not deter

people from speaking freely, as a video camera might have. In fact, the participants did not seem to notice the recorder on the table, as I found out later when one participant asked where the tape recorder had been and, when I pointed to it, said he thought it was just my cell phone.

But one disadvantage I discovered when I returned to my office and played back the recording was that in some sections of the tape people were talking over each other and thus it was difficult to comprehend what they were saying. One way to prevent this from happening would have been to provide separate microphones for each participant; however, this also would have had the disadvantage of drawing more of the participants' attention to the fact that they were being recorded. In the long run, this trade-off did not seem to cause too much difficulty in the data collection because I did take observational notes and completed a reconstructed text of the data immediately following the activity. Doing so provided added insurance that the data had been collected in three different ways, which also gave me enough triangulation to crosscheck that I had captured all the data possible. To give my readers a good idea of how the data was captured in multiple forms and coordinated, I explain following, in narrative fashion, the process in greater detail. Although my references are to Group A, the same procedure was used for Group B; only the number of sub-groups differed.

Procedure for Using Audio Recording

Once the facilitator asked participants to discuss and draw, I began the observation process. I sat at one table where four middle managers were, and as they

started talking, I started the tape recorder and placed it close to me. I sat in a chair at the end of the table facing the flipchart, with two managers on each side of the table. I held a board with a notebook attached so that I could take my observational notes alongside the tape recording. The tape recorder was a small, digital Sony unit. As mentioned previously, no one in this group seemed to notice the tape recorder, and they did not even acknowledge its presence or show apprehension before they spoke. As a researcher, I did not draw attention to myself or intervene in any way; my intent was simply to observe them and let them behave as naturally as possible, which I believe they did.

Coordination of Data Captured Through Tape, Notes, and Drawings

Coordination of the tape, the discussion, the drawings, and my notes was crucial and posed the biggest challenge for me in the data collection phase of the study. This challenge was met in part by using the digital readout on the recorder. Once the activity began, I started the recorder with the beginning of the Blanchard video, taking notes along the way of key phrases and statements that I thought I would want to review. The time stamp or readout made it easy to note when certain things were said, which was quite helpful later on when locating a certain section on the tape.

When the group members moved their discussion to their flipchart drawings, it became extremely important to match the verbal dialog with the drawings that were being referenced on the flipchart. The mechanism I devised turned out to be extremely beneficial in that when I returned to the data afterward, it was somewhat

organized according to my notes and the audio/flipchart references. This mechanism, as shown in Figure 1, included (a) a six-part template that I created for each photographed flipchart-drawing and (b) next to each, the corresponding page of my own time-stamped observational notes.

In Figure 1 the left box shows that on this particular drawing, the upper right part contained rocks and that on the tape, that these were discussed at 23:03 (the time stamp on the recorder), that the middle left part of the drawing contained waves, and that on the audiotape, these were discussed at 27:03. The box to the right is an example that contains my observational notes, which indicate that these participants mentioned that rocks were representative of organizational barriers.

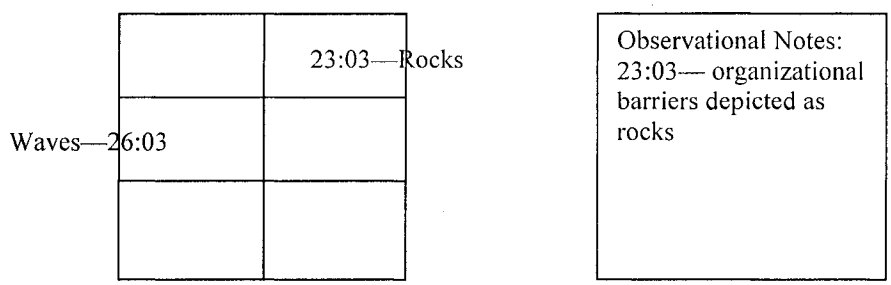

Figure 1: Example of data-recording template and notes.

Observational Notes and Mapping

During the activity, I took notes manually with a pen and paper. Most of the notes referred to key phrases or statements about what the meanings were and short descriptions of them. I also took notes on the participants' emotions as they explained themselves. Because this activity required creative thinking and expression though words and drawings, it was extremely important to capture the tenor of the data. Emotions do not translate well over audio recording, and so it was important to indicate the emotional quality of the dialogue and timestamp the reference so that the emotional impact could be captured later and become a part of the analysis.

Most of my observational notes were taken during the activity when the participants were explaining their meanings and sketching them out on the flipchart. At the point the group members had to stand up and present their flipcharts to the rest of the class, I transitioned my technique of note taking to note mapping. That is, I sketched the flipchart on a whole piece of paper in my notebook and divided the sections up. As described previously, one technique I used was to sketch a two-column by three-row box indicating six parts of the flipchart (the upper left, upper right, middle left, middle right, lower left, and lower right) and then write in the digital recording timestamp and observational notes on the relevant sections of the flipchart in my notebook (see Figure 1). Thus, when I read the verbal description of the drawing or a portion of it, I was able to locate it later on by the timestamp.

Photographs of the Flipcharts and
Obtaining the Actual Flipcharts

At the end of the activity, I took the flipchart down and rolled it up, as it was now in my possession. The program no longer needed to reference the flipcharts and instead of discarding them, as has been done so many times before, I removed them and took them. The flipchart is an essential record and as such is important to preserve. I took digital photos of the flipcharts for added insurance; that way if anything were to happen to the originals, I would always have a copy. I stored the electronic file of the photograph in my records for later use in this paper. As for the original flipcharts, I taped them to the walls of my home office. Since the flipcharts were quite large and filled with many details, it was best to have them out in an accessible area so I could reference them as I documented the data and conducted the data analysis. This was useful, as I was always able to look at the flipcharts every day as I worked with the data and to put Post-It notes on those sections with the most meaningful descriptions. When themes started to take shape, I wrote them on the flipchart and Post-It, attaching them to the section of the drawing that represented the particular theme.

Reconstructed Text

Upon completing the observation, I collected the flipcharts and returned to my office, where I began the process of reconstructing the text. In essence, before listening to the digital recordings, I wanted to rewrite from my notes an entire recreation of the flipchart activity. This narrative explained the whole process–how

the meanings were presented and what symbols were used to represent what. This was all handwritten in my notebook and some of it immediately was written on the Post-It notes that were pasted directly to the relevant section on the flipchart, with cross-references to the corresponding portion of the audiotape. This technique was extremely advantageous because, as I later found out, some parts of the audio recording were not clear, and therefore, it was helpful to have the reconstructed text from my memory as a backup. In fact, I also used the recorder to capture my overall response to the activity so as not to miss anything in my reconstructed notes.

Analysis of Data: Methods

After the first session, a few potential categories–about four or five concepts–began to emerge from the observation data taken from the transcripts, observation notes, reconstructed text, and flipchart images. As the study progressed and I analyzed the data further, it became clearer to me what the images represented and how these were associated with the participants' conceptions and explanations of what their organization looked like to them in terms of its leadership. The following sections describe the methods used for analyzing the data.

Content Analysis and Analytic Coding

Content analysis—that is, analyzing the contents of a communication–involves looking for patterns and relationships that may exist (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). Content analysis is a technique that enables researchers to study human behavior in an

indirect way by analyzing their communications, be they words, drawings, photographs, artwork, music, or any other text that can be analyzed. "A person or group's conscious and unconscious beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideas are often revealed in their communications" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p. 405), and therefore, content analysis "is often used in conjunction with other methods, in particular, historical and ethnographic research" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p. 406), to give researchers additional insights into problems and hypotheses.

For this study, it was determined that the most appropriate way to analyze the data was to look at the semantic relationships between signs and the meanings the participants ascribed to them and then to examine (a) whether participants within the same group (the subgroups within Group A or Group B) agreed or disagreed in their signs and meanings; and (b) whether Group A and Group B came up with the same or different signs and meanings.

In analyzing the data, the focus was upon the terms the participants used. These terms became the units for coding (in total, 93 units), which were grouped into four categories for Group A and five categories for Group B, according to each category's semantic-thematic indices or similarities. With such data analysis techniques, "A careful count is usually made of the number of times the units that fit in the various categories are found in the communication" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996, p. 407).

One of the biggest challenges in analyzing such data is determining the meaning of the participants' sense making or meaning making. For example, when a

person sees or hears a word, he or she will assign a meaning to it (interpretation). Derived from a common cultural usage or experience, the context in which the concept is used should indicate meaning. However, the meaning is not always evident, and sometimes what a respondent says is not necessarily what he or she means. Thus, researchers might have to look for hidden or obscure meanings that might not be immediately evident to them from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For this reason, comparative analysis for similarities or differences must be done.

Comparative analysis involves conceptual ordering–that is, "organizing the data into discrete categories (and sometimes ratings) according to their properties and dimensions and then using description to elucidate those categories" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 19). When the categories are identified, concepts evolve that provide descriptions about the data to increase understanding. Descriptions draw on ordinary vocabulary to convey ideas about things, people, and places (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), and often, description makes use of similes and metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In short, the descriptive details chosen by the storyteller (the researcher) usually are consciously or unconsciously selected based on what he or she saw or heard or considered important. From such descriptions, more abstract interpretations of data and theory development may result, although that may not be the main goal of the research.

But insights do not occur haphazardly; rather, they happen to prepared minds during interplay with the data. As researchers, we cannot completely divorce ourselves from who we are and what we know. In the present study, my being an

insider certainly assisted in the conceptual and theoretical organization of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Although the aim of my research study was not to form theory, as is the aim of most grounded-theory studies based on Strauss and Corbin, even they themselves acknowledge that insofar as any description already embodies concepts, it forms the basis for theory development (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Open Coding

Open coding usually begins with line-by-line analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this study, the open-coding process was used. The aim was to document the many different meanings there were concerning the topic of leadership. This exercise/research technique has many important functions but perhaps the "most critical is that each person interprets differently and that any one of the interpretations could potentially be correct" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 18). However, it is important to remember that the meanings ascribed to images and icons are strictly those of the participants. "People constantly are thinking comparatively and making use of metaphors and similes when they speak" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 79), as was the case in this study. Participants used the stream metaphor to clarify and increase their understanding, first making a list of the common properties associated with the stream metaphor. In their drawings and explanations of them, properties and dimensions were later used in the analysis phase of the study. For example, once an object was found to share some common characteristics with another object, the two objects were

categorized with the same name (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This open coding and contingency analysis technique allowed for the categories and concepts to emerge.

In this study, *strategy*, *work*, and *people* became broad-level concepts for the participants' drawings and explanations. These categories emerged from the data by identifying similar characteristics among the participants' meanings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), or attributes of a category. But the category characteristics or attributes are not absolutes but rather dimensions aligned along a continuum or range (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, concepts are related by degrees of similarity. For example, the category of *strategy* includes a continuum of concepts ranging from "strategic" to "not strategic," which is to say, a category is characterized by having more or less of a certain concept's attributes. These attributes, or *indices*, as Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940) calls them, are described more fully in the next chapter.

Data Analysis Procedure and Techniques

Analysis of the collected data was iterative and ongoing. In the final phase of my data analysis, summaries allowed me to identify themes that ran throughout the observations, transcriptions, notes, and flipcharts. These data were then coded and analyzed, using Strauss and Corbin's (1998) *Basics of Qualitative Research* as a guide to sort and categorize the data.

Peirce (cited in Houser & Kloesel, 1992) indices were used for the final analysis of each group's data because his work provides a means to clarify key terms and the theoretic interrelationships among their meanings. The data were analyzed by

hand and categorized in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. A graphical representation of the data was plotted using the flipchart photos and labels to better display the associations among the data.

The coding process is made up of distinct steps that lead to a deeper understanding of the data in relation to the research questions. These steps, each of which describes an analytic technique, are as follows:

1. Microanalysis,
2. Open coding and memo development,
3. Axial coding,
4. Selective coding, and
5. Semiotic coding (explained in Chapter 4).

Microanalysis

The first step was to use microanalysis to sort through the data. After transcribing the verbal explanations of the participants in the study, I combed through the documents with a detailed line-by-line examination to generate initial categories and suggest relationships among them. These "in vivo" codes assisted me with the organization and management of the initial data (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). The transcribed audio and observational notes and reconstructed text were drafted and inserted into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. A column-sorting technique was used to manage and analyze the data. The spreadsheet features were used to collect, sort, and

filter the data. As categories, concepts, and codes emerged, they were collected and entered into the spreadsheet.

The data totaled 500 lines of transcriptions. In studying the transcriptions, areas were highlighted and were grouped into common categories. Each of the highlighted areas were added into the spreadsheet, along with the transcription line to which each category referred (see Figure 2). Initially, I used Microsoft Word to cut and paste quotes and phrases from all of the observations, thus creating sections for each category that emerged from the analysis. The flipchart images were also tagged with the line number for later reference.

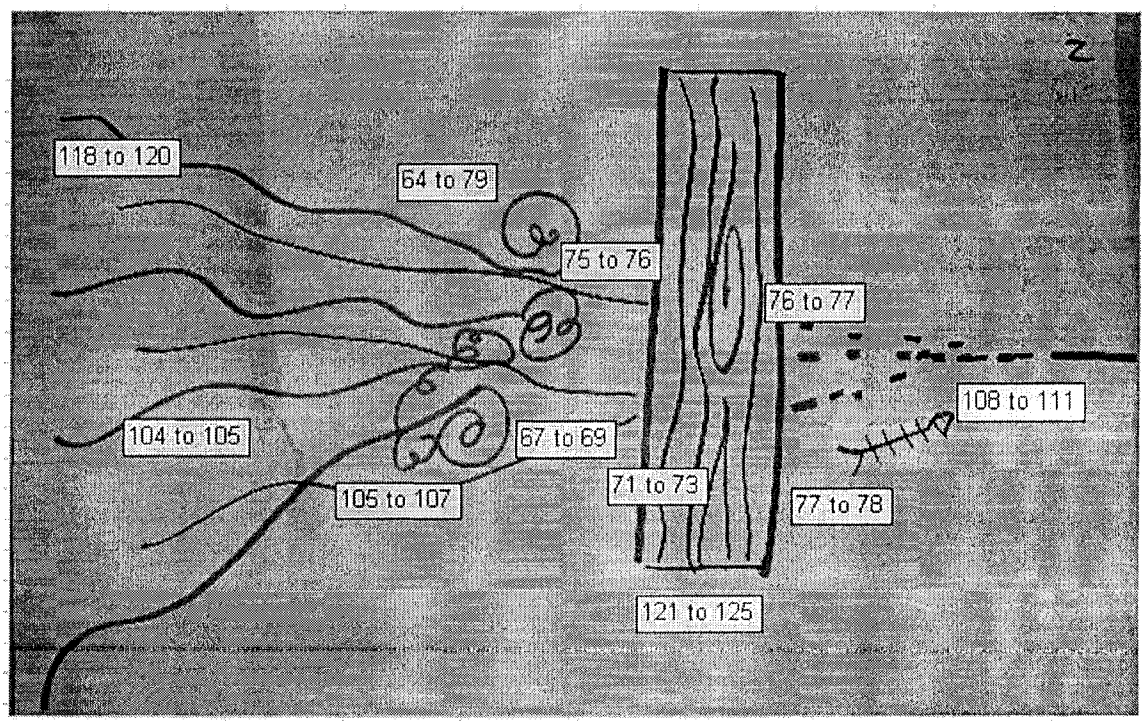

Figure 2: Flipchart drawing with coded references.

Open Coding and Memo Development

This step in the analysis process involved taking the outcomes of microanalysis–the phrases and statement related to the initial categories/codes–and working them into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet made it possible for the organization and categorization process to happen. First, the spreadsheet was set up with many worksheets so that I could manage the iterative back-and-forth coding of the data.

The open-coding, line-by-line examination of text, began by reading and labeling (*coding*) each sentence, phrase, or statement in order to identify the initial categories or codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). My initial list included statements directly from the participants, such as: *set your little eddies up; people drowning in the whitewater;* and *people who were on the other side have perished waiting for the water supply.* Quotations were important to include during this open-coding process. In the transcribed notes, I color-coded the initial categories that emerged; for example, water statements were blue, rocks were pink, people were yellow, and so on. By highlighting the phrases and statements with their associated colors, I then started the open-coding process by compiling quotes and images for each code with its allied categories and concepts.

The data were coded iteratively. As I read the transcriptions and reviewed the flipcharts, I identified quotes and phrases, coded them, created a definition for the code, and moved on. Each time I used an existing code, I would check its definition against the quotation, creating a new code if warranted. This approach is consistent

with the defining rule for the constant comparison method. Use of the spreadsheet was also an iterative tool that enabled me to manage the various data easily. Finally, research memos were written during the open-coding process, and these later assisted me with further analysis techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Data Management and Analysis

The spreadsheet database was extremely helpful in organizing the data and providing an electronic audit trail leading back to the original statements or notes. As all categories/codes were studied, the concepts emerged. All concepts were entered into the spreadsheet on a separate worksheet. For example, for the concept "water spiraling out of control," a row was thus labeled and added to the concepts worksheet. Through the interactive analysis process, it was evident that the categories/codes were found in many places.

Axial Coding

Axial coding, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998) is the process of relating categories to their subcategories. The process is termed "axial" because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions. The spreadsheet was used several times during axial coding to collapse the categories into the five concepts. The conceptual ordering with descriptions allowed for the constant comparison process explained previously. The 93 codes were studied; common characteristics were revealed; and similarities were noted, thus

resulting in five main concepts that helped answer the research questions. These concepts or categories are *people, workflow, barriers, strategy*, and *rewards*. In addition, the concepts also presented casual relationships with each other. For example, *workflow* is linked to the concept of *strategy*. The following section explains the management of the codes and how the concepts began to reveal themselves.

During the iterative filter process, trends appeared that provoked another look at the transcriptions and the image-data artifacts. The auto filter was used in several ways. For example, a concept would be filtered to display on those line references associated with the concept. The concepts would be sorted to stack all the concepts together with their corresponding references. In this way, the real essence of what the concept referred to could be captured for a deeper understanding. Comparisons were also made among the codes. For example, there seemed to be a convoluted orientation between two concepts, depending how they were explained. For example, "water going out" was coded as *resources*, given the context in which it was explained, but later, "water moving" was described as *strategy*.

Eventually the axial coding process allowed for the sifting of categories and concepts to be linked based upon similarities, properties, and dimensions. For example, many key phrases were captured for data that held the same properties. One example, *barriers*, was often linked to similar codes such as *bottleneck, dam, rocks,* and *hurdles*. Another example includes *strategy*, often linked to similar codes such as *energy* or *direction of the water*. Iterative filtering and sorting allowed for the

common codes to be categorized into similar concepts, just as the ones mentioned above. Essentially, all 93 codes related to the concepts or categories listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Concepts (or Categories) and Their Associated Descriptions

Concept	Description
Resources	Fish as representing resources
Work	Water as representing work
Organizational challenges	Rocks as representing organizational challenges
Strategy	Streams as representing strategy
Rewards	Sun, sailboats, flowers, and trees as representing rewards

Selective Coding

Selective coding is the process of integrating and refining the elements of grounded theory; again, a theory is not the overall aim of this study. However, the selective-coding process allows the data to be framed in such a way that the overall results and summary of the study can be explained. During the axial-coding process, the categories/codes were analyzed against the code relationships, as I looked for a central explanatory concept. This process includes consideration of who the analyst is and his or her thinking that has occurred over time through continuous immersion in the data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) list six criteria for choosing a central category (see Figure 3).

1. It must be central; that is, all other major categories can be related to it.
2. It must appear frequently in the data. This means that within all or almost all cases, there are indicators that point to the concept.
3. The explanation that evolves by relating the categories is logical and consistent. There is no forcing of data.
4. The name of the phrase used to describe the central category should be sufficiently abstract that it can be used to do research in other substantive areas, leading to the development of a more general theory.
5. As the concept is refined analytically through integration with other concepts, the theory grows in depth and explanatory power.
6. The concept is able to explain variation, as well as the main point made by the data; that is, when conditions vary, the explanation still holds, although the way in which a phenomenon is expressed might look somewhat different. One also should be able to explain contradictory or alternative cases in terms of that central idea.

(Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 147)

Figure 3: Criteria for choosing a central category.

The subcategories were more or less variations on the codes represented in Table 2. Table 3, shows the number of codes or links for each of the five categories.

Table 3

Selective Coding Results

Code	Number of Codes	% of Total Codes
Resources	27	29
Work	34	37
Organizational challenges	17	18
Strategy	11	12
Rewards	4	4
Total	93	100%

Basic Spreadsheet Organization

The spreadsheet contained multiple worksheets, one for each group. Appendix C displays a section of the spreadsheet that was used to manage and analyze the data. Column D references the lines in the transcripts. Group A FC 2–HL worksheet represents the lines in the transcript and the area of the flipchart to which the lines refer. Column F provides the key symbols or terms used to explain the images and occurrences on the flipchart. Columns G and E contain references to the reconstructed text and observation notes taken during the observation activity and afterwards. (The reconstructed text is my explanation of what was being said.) The observation notes include key observations, such as laughter, body language, and overall conceptual observations.

The individual transcripts were hyperlinked to the spreadsheet for easy access. Also, the transcription lines were associated with the drawings, as illustrated previously in Figure 2. The concepts and categories button-linked to a separate spreadsheet that organized the emerging concepts and categories. The first couple of rows were frozen, which kept the image buttons and transcriptions in viewing site. The spreadsheet was helpful in pulling together the transcripts, reconstructed text, observation notes, flipchart photographs, and the flipchart photographs with annotations.

Data Sorting

A spreadsheet database was used to organize and group the data for analysis. The auto filter and sorting features were used with iterative and back-and-forth analyses among the data. It was through this process that the 93 codes emerged and then were grouped into five concepts. This process exposed the relationships among the categories and help to provide organization and structure for the data.

Concepts

The discussion of the concepts has been organized by categories. These convoluted relationships help explain the data and contribute to answering the overall research questions. Terms were chosen for each of the categories to reflect the common themes tying that category's concepts together. Each term and its definition is provided in Chapter 4. The following organizer, shown in Figure 4, helps provide

the framework for the results reported in Chapter 4. In that discussion, the individual concepts associated with each category are discussed, along with the supporting data and references.

Figure 4: Concepts.

Analysis of the Data

For the purposes of this study, the data are reported and analyzed according to the objectives and questions initially proposed. The first objective was to understand how people create shared meaning during a training activity, in this case, answering the question, *What does leadership look like?* or, alternatively, *What does your organization look like?* These questions are addressed in Chapter 4, as well as the subresearch questions. That discussion of findings is presented according to each of the two groups in this study: Group A, the managerial participants, and Group B, the nonmanagerial participants.

Summary

This chapter has presented the various qualitative methods used to collect and analyze the data from Groups A and B. By using a multimethod approach, it was possible to reveal how meaning is shared when describing what leadership "looks like" in the organization. The resulting data, it was pointed out, can eventually be used to provide recommendations to the organization in support of future LSOC initiatives.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

As discussed in Chapter 3, my data analysis and subsequent coding of the participants' comments and drawings suggest (a) the recurrence of four images or icons–water, rocks, fish, and streams–that they used to represent their impressions of what leadership and their organization look like; and (b) the four main concepts–work, organizational challenges, resources, and strategies–that they associated with their own specific innovation-related images and the meanings they ascribed to those images. In addition to these, Group B also used a fifth group of icons of flowers, sailboats, sun, and trees to represent a fifth concept, that of rewards.

This chapter presents the findings of my analyses of each group's images and the ways they interpreted them. To help understand the findings, however–and especially how images, symbols, signs, or icons operate–it is first necessary to review Peirce's theory of semiotics in greater detail, for his work provides some clarification of key terms used in this chapter, as well as the theoretic interrelationship between signs and their meaning.

Peirce's Theory of Semiotics

Peirce's (cited in Houser & Kloesel, 1992) theory of semiotics is important in this study of the use of metaphor because it accounts for how language, knowledge, experience, and context are mediated through the use of signs. According to Peirce, "every concept and every thought beyond immediate perception is a sign" (p. xxx). Peirce defines a *sign* as "anything which is so determined by something else, called its *object*, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its *interpretant*, that the latter is thereby mediately determined by the former" (p. xxx). Peirce believed that knowledge is acquired in two ways, by reasoning and by experience, and he argues that, "all reasoning is an interpretation of signs of some kind" (p. 4). *Meaning*, according to Peirce, is thought that passes between two states–from ignorance to knowledge–through learning.

Central to Peirce's (cited in Houser & Kloesel, 1992) theory is his distinction among three principal kinds of signs, which together represent a trichotomy. First, there are likenesses or *icons*. These convey ideas of the things they represent, simply by implying something else. Second, there are *indices*, which are defined as the physical attributes of a sign. Third, there are *symbols*, which acquire associated meanings by their usage in particular contexts. Peirce maintains that pictorial ideas can stand for the likeness of a sign, and an example he provides is the intercommunication between two people of different languages. To communicate, they must resort to using imitative sounds, gestures, or drawings of pictures to represent likenesses of what they are trying to communicate.

As in the present study, common experiences and a shared context are essential in determining the meaning (or *object*) of signs. Just as a map must be more than a pictorial image, an icon must have an index (or *indices*) to give it meaning. According to Peirce (cited in Houser & Kloesel, 1992), "anything which focuses the attention is an index. Anything which startles us is an index in so far as it marks the junction between two portions of experience" (p. 108-109). In the case of symbols, what gives them meaning are not the things or words themselves but the ideas associated with them. In Peirce's words, people "realize the idea connected with the word; it [the word or symbol] does not, in itself, identify those things, . . . instead we are able to imagine those things, and have associated the word with them" (p. 9). Table 1 details Peirce's sign system and further distinguishes his conceptions of icon, index, and symbol.

Finally, and most importantly, Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940) maintains that "We think only in signs" and that mental signs are of mixed nature, symbol-parts called concepts or *objects*. Symbols and their meanings can grow out of experience and its use. As Peirce states, "The art of reasoning is the art of marshalling such signs, and of finding out the truth" (p. 10).

In the present study, the way in which the participants create meaning–or determine what the organization and its leadership look like–depends on how they marshall the signs associated with the overarching metaphor of the stream. To explain this process, Peirce (cited in Houser & Kloesel, 1992) asserts, "With every sign is one agent that utters the sign, acoustically, optically, visually, or otherwise, while the other

is the interpreter" (p. 403). The object of the sign is the idea or concept upon which the sign is built. Next, the interpretant of the sign comprehends the meaning of the sign through the emotions, energy, or logic it conveys. Peirce explains,

> The object and the interpretant are thus merely the two correlates of the sign, the one being antecedent, the other consequent of the sign. Signs signify something and name something else . . . while that which it is intended to name must be ascertained not from the term itself but by observation of the context or other attendant circumstances of its utterance. (p. 429)

In this study, the observed context involved the two preparatory activities by which the participants were introduced to the meta-metaphor of a stream, the main activity in which they were asked to use flipcharts on which to draw their impressions of what their organization and its leadership looked like to them, and the final discussion of their drawings. In the process of creating their drawings, they came to consensus about what images to use and the meanings that they ascribed to those images. Based on Peirce's (cited in Houser & Kloesel, 1992) sign system, in the remainder of this chapter's discussion of findings, the term *icon* refers to a specific image that they associated with the stream metaphor, and the term *object* refers to the meaning–the idea or concept–that they said the icon represented or meant. Because these concepts reflect the participants' perceptions of the organization's values and culture, the findings also reveal new shades of meaning to every aspect of their organization and, therefore, may be especially useful in planning and communicating this organization's change initiatives in the future.

Results of Warm-Up Activity: Groups' Associations with Stream Metaphor

To review, at the beginning of each session, one with Group A and one with Group B, the facilitator introduced the overarching metaphor of a stream and, as a warm-up activity, asked the group participants, "What are the elements of a stream?" As might be expected, both the managers (Group A) and the additional participants (Group B) responded in traditional ways, using images and terms commonly associated with a stream. As compiled on the facilitator's flipchart, the following are the images and concepts elicited by each group. The difference in length is mainly due to the fact that Group B was more engaged at this point in the activity and simply offered more items to list. This warm-up activity set the stage for the main activity by helping participants to begin thinking in metaphoric ways.

Group A: Managers' Responses

Pebbles and rocks

White flowers

Curving

Small fish

Swimming upstream or downstream

Movement

Group B: Other Participants' Responses

Pebbles

Flowing H_20 sound

Salmon swimming up and down

Peaceful feeling/relaxation

Ripples

Ecological system

Mud between your toes

Sparkly water

Hopping from rock to rock to get across

Beaver damns

Frogs

Fly fishing and tubing

Groups' Drawings and Discussions of Them

As previously described in Chapter 3, the next preparatory activity involved showing the group the four-minute Ken Blanchard® video, in which the stream metaphor is used as a framework for describing an organization and its leadership. The facilitator then moved to the main activity of the session by (a) in small groups of three or four people, having the participants use the stream metaphor to draw on a flipchart composite pictures that represented to them "what leadership looks like or

what your organization looks like;" and (b) finally having the small groups present to the whole group their flipchart drawings and their interpretations of them.

The following sections organize my findings according to what main images each group (Group A and Group B) sketched on their flipcharts and how each group explained what the drawings meant to them. As was evident in their explanations of meaning, and as will become clear shortly, a single image often simultaneously meant different things to them. Thus, although the following presentation may seem to suggest a one-to-one correspondence between a sign or image and its meaning, the groups' discussions revealed that an image might reflect rich, complex concepts–sometimes overlapping and interrelated, at other times more distinct and specific. Nonetheless, some patterns emerged, and it is these patterns that serve as a framework for the remainder of this chapter. These patterns are discussed in reference to the two key issues informing this research project: the groups' impressions of its leadership and the organization itself.

As mentioned previously, for both groups, the data reveal that the most frequently used images were the icons of water, rocks, fish, and streams, and that these icons were usually associated with the objects of work, organizational challenges, resources, and strategy, respectively.

Group A: Middle Managers' Images of the Company's Leadership and Organization

Water as Representing Work

A stream, by definition, consists of water and therefore it was not surprising that when asked to draw what their organization and its leadership look like, the managers frequently created images or icons of *water.* All three of the managers' flipchart drawings (Figures 1, 2, and 4) associated water with the object of *work.* However, the water icon–and, by association, work–was represented with various signs and various shades of meaning, depending on its direction, movement, or other attributes. For example, straight, smooth lines represented calmness when organizational work was flowing normally and without much disruption in some areas (see Figure 1). However, when the organization encountered a challenge or barrier, the water icons changed from straight lines to circles and then to multicircular swirls–referred to as *whirlpools*–indicating disruptions in the workflow. Most often, and on all three of their flipcharts, the managers' drawings depicted work within their organization as water flowing narrowly and roughly, as turbulent or spiraling, indicating that current organizational changes were disrupting their work and creating problems (see Figure 5.)

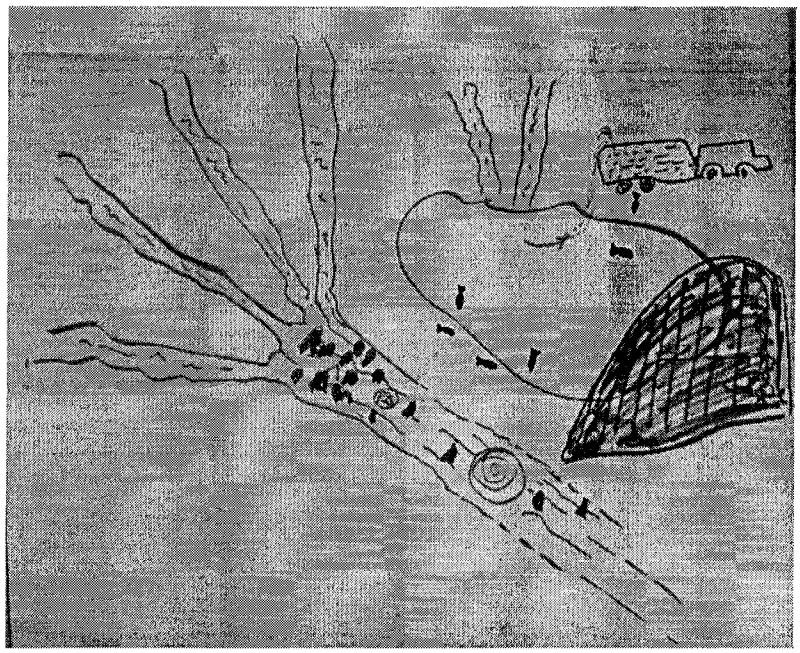

Figure 5: Group A. Water-flow depicting work.

For example, water was drawn in such a way that, as a manager explained, "[There are] not enough resources with a skinny stream." Another manager, drawing upon his experience and referencing Figure 5, noted, "I just came from a situation like this, . . . it is a bottleneck, . . . everything is in a swirl, . . . ah, like a whirlpool." Associated icons used in the drawings were waterfalls, spirals, rapids, and streams, each referring to the quality of work and how it moved or did not move in the organization. In explaining their drawings, others mentioned that work can either "go over the edge" or "swirl up and hit the dam . . . and things just spiral out of control."

Another important feature of the water was its direction–the way it was flowing one way or another–and what that meant to the managers in terms of the organization's work. Although some images depicted the water as moving along the

stream, all the flipchart drawings represented the organization as water flowing along until some type of change disrupted the organization. At that point, the water was then described as swirling out of control due to an organizational change, such as layoffs or regulatory constraints. The effect was that, as one manager noted, "We have people drowning in the whitewater," which was represented by circular lines. Finally, dotted lines were used to indicate that the water was dissipating (see Figure 6). To the managers, this meant that the organization could not sufficiently overcome the barrier and thus the water or work could not reach the other side. As a result, the dearth of water also became symbolic of the scarcity of resources within the organization, which ultimately affected the fish in the water. Thus, although overall, water in whirlpools and rapid currents was commonly used by the managers to symbolize the organization going through changes or rough times, sometimes they also used water imagery to denote people or resources–using the terms *people* and *water* interchangeably. To illustrate, one of the flipcharts (see Figure 6) depicted water as the organization's energy that moves its employees in one direction or another.

In explaining Figure 6, the managers noted that when the energy (water) is met with challenges, it becomes useless: "So what we have is a lot of good, creative energy and diversity I guess coming into the stream. And unfortunately, we hit the dam and logjam at this point. And what happens is a lot of good energy and everything kind of spirals off out of control." They further described their inability to remove the "logjam," represented in Figure 6 as the huge, brown rectangle, which

causes insufficient water or energy to reach the other side. As a result, as shown in Figure 6, only a few droplets of water reach the other side.

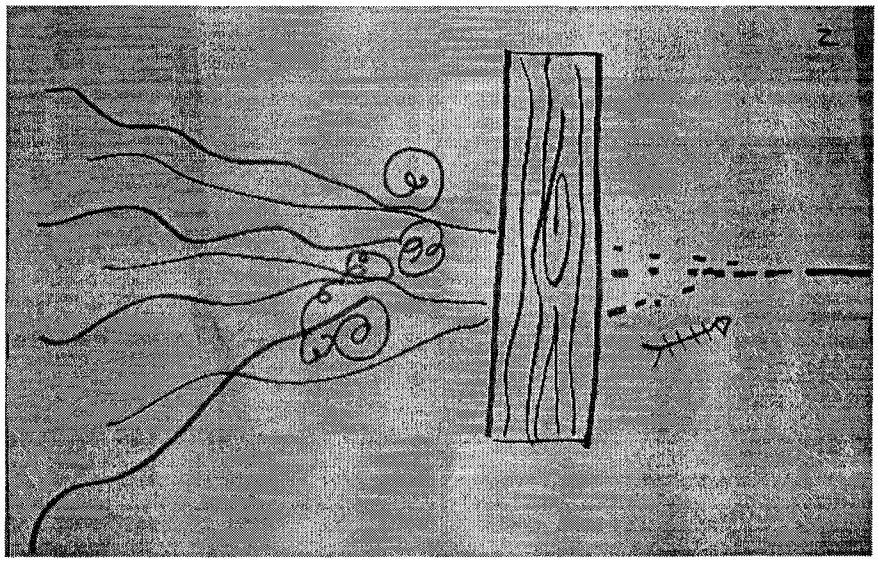

Figure 6: Group A. Water-flow depicting work or energy.

Rocks as Representing Organizational Challenges

Second is the icon of rocks. All three of the managers' flipchart drawings contained the icons of *rocks* (represented as brown circles) and logjams, which they said signified various *organizational challenges* (the icon's object). For example, one manager explained a logjam as an interruption of work and a drain of energy: "Unfortunately we hit the dam and logjam at this point. And what happens is a lot of

good energy and everything kind of spirals off out of control and kind of slides up on the banks." Another manager referred to the rock as being "a pretty big piece, . . . and it's a big problem in our organization." Other rocks were described as organizational barriers, as "hurdles to get around." They also indicated that "Some rocks are very hard to pass around, . . . and some rocks are difficult but doable." Each icon was used to signify the meaning of organizational barriers causing some kind of disruption, change, and overall disruption to the flow of work.

Fish as Representing Resources

Third, to illustrate the managers' meaning of leadership, they often referred to their flipchart drawings of *fish* (or fishes) as the icon, and *resources* as the object of the fish. The fish symbolized the people within the organization as living or dying, depending on what the organization looked like, how the leadership was managing the fish, and what obstacles impacted the fish. As shown in Figure 6, the managers' dead fish was drawn as a fish bone. In explaining the drawing's context, a manager said that this was how an organization, filled with activity, can reach a standstill, thus losing its energy and vigor, resulting in dead fish. For example, one participant referred to the fish as "dead fish bones sitting on the side" and another explained, "We have some dead fish swimming around."

In their explanations, sometimes the managers dropped the fish metaphor and term and instead used words to denote the object itself: resources. Thus, in referring to the drawings of the fish, the words *fish* and *people* (or *employees* or *groups*) were

used interchangeably. For example, in commenting on the fishbone in Figure 2, a manager explained, "People who were on the other side have perished waiting for the water supply." Another manager explained the fish as people in this way: "Some people are getting in and some people are going out," as he pointed to the pond but was actually referring to the organization.

Another flipchart depicted fish in a similar way, as explained by another manager: "We have lots of things happening together, . . . everything is going in circles around like that. . . . The stream is still coming, but some water is not going anywhere. . . . We have some dead fish swimming around." Similarly, this description showed how activity, as represented by the water, can flourish in some areas of the organization, but in others, it can stop, thus resulting in dead fish. As one manager asked another one, "Do you want to draw dead bodies on the side? Or a dead fish on the side?"

Interestingly, in another drawing, the participants portrayed another kind of fish–a shark–pointing out, "We think of the shark as the manager." In explaining this image, they noted that the shark (leadership) has the ability to eat the smaller fish (subordinates) or "to take care of the situation." This connection between how the organization is doing and the power of leadership to effect change leads to the next icon used in the drawings: streams representative of organizational strategy. As suggested in the foregoing discussion, water typically represented an essential requirement for healthy fish (or thriving resources or people), and often the water was

portrayed as various kinds of streams or the way the organization flowed and was headed–in other words, strategy.

Streams as Representing Strategy

Perhaps the most complex and convoluted image used in the drawings was that of streams, which overall signified the direction in which the organization was going. Although the images were similar to those of water (e.g., depicted as circular swirls and straight lines), the managers frequently used the *streams* icon (referenced as lines) to signify *strategy* as the object. Thus, streams typically referred to the effect of the energy, direction, and flow of the water. This was substantiated when the facilitator asked the participants for clarification, "[Regarding] the spirals, are we to understand that the spirals are the energy that hit the logjam and bounce back, curling back, right?" To which the participant answered, "Right, and they kind of dissipate and become chaotic." Sometimes, the streams represented organizational challenges that determined the direction and flow of the organization. As shown in Figure 7, for example, the stream moved from side to side depending on how many organizational barriers were in the way. Sometimes the stream was a wide body of water; other times, the stream narrowed through tight passageways or, as the participants called them, "bottlenecks."

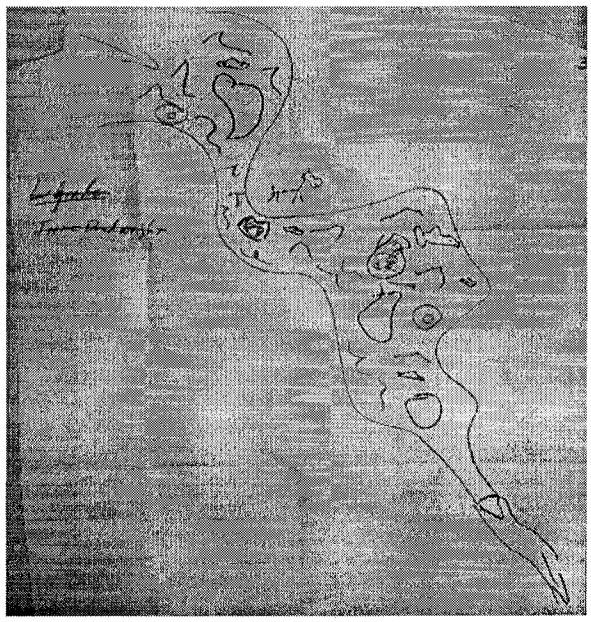

Figure 7: Group A: Streams depicting strategy.

In general, however, the streams were drawn to represent the organization's strategy or direction, depending on what the managers thought the organization looked like and how its leadership was managing strategy. For example, in Figure 1, the drawing shows two different types of streams to represent two quite different organizational strategies: one that was adding its resources by bringing four streams, or "four different tributaries" into one and one that was depleting its resource base by removing the water out. The managers explained that the first instance–the tributaries flowing into one stream–represented how the company was undergoing a merger to consolidate different businesses into one organization.

But the other images–those showing the organization depleting its resources by removing the water–portrayed a quite different organizational strategy. In Figure 4, in

response to the huge rock, representing an outside regulatory body, a water-tank truck draining the water out of the pond is shown. In explaining the drawing, participants indicated that leadership and management were taking their organizational energies and people elsewhere. The stream signified leadership's strategy to move water (work) out of this pond and away from the organization. As a result, in the drawing, fish (the resources or people) are jumping out of the pond, signifying that they too are leaving the organization.

In an emotional moment when describing this drawing, the manager presenting the flipchart to the group described the situation: "There is [a reference to division name] side, where stream is coming from the side. There is a stagnant pool. No vision of going anywhere. Management started pumping water out." As the presenter said these words, all participants shook their heads in agreement, obviously familiar with the crisis. A sense of loss seemed to fill the room as he described that "management started pumping water out," clearly implying that they had to get out of the situation.

In a more hopeful rendering of organizational strategy, another drawing (see Figure 1) showed dark blue lines and light blue lines to represent different streams entering the flow of activity. The participants referred to this as "diversity. . . coming into the stream." And although the drawings represent strategy as maneuvering through tight passageways, the participants seemed to have faith that, despite travails, things would work out. "The one thing about the water is that you are not able to see where it is going, but there is a direction (strategy) to the flow." In other words,

although the stream may twist and turn due to organizational changes and although people may not know the exact direction it is heading, there is an underlining strategy to all of the work.

Group B: Other Participants' Images of the Company's Leadership and Organization

For the most part, Group B's drawings and explanations reveal that their icons (water, rocks, fish, and streams) and the objects assigned to them (work, challenges, resources, and strategy, respectively) were similar to those of Group A, the managers. Therefore, the following findings focus primarily on ways in which Group B's drawings, icons, and objects differed from Group A's. Interestingly, Group B's drawings contained images that were both more frightening and more reassuring than Group A's.

As shown in Figure 8, water is taking various paths and going off in various directions due to mergers and acquisitions, but the drawing also contains some threatening images not seen in Group A's drawings: clouds, lightning, and rain. The iconic meaning of dark clouds and lightning bolts is that during this time, the water is quite turbulent, suggesting that the nonmanagerial personnel (Group B) are confused because they do not quite understand the direction the organization is going with the business spin-offs and acquisitions.

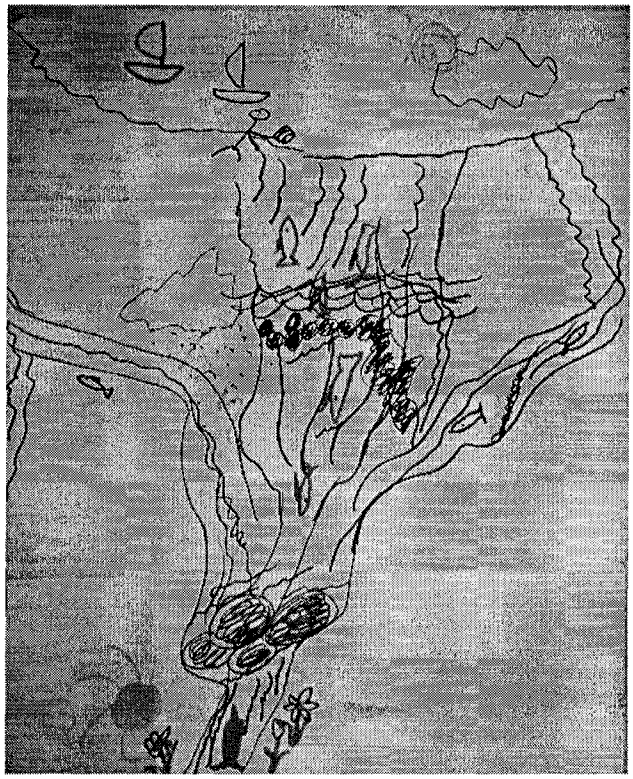

Figure 8: Group B: Flipchart.

In Figure 8, that sense of chaos and lack of direction is further illustrated by fish (people) leaving the stream (organization) or swimming in the wrong direction as a sign of resistance. As one participant explained, "Fish [going] both ways shows resistance to the way it used to be. Some fish are leaving." This comment was met with laughter and agreement, almost as if the participants know that some people simply cannot go with the flow and cannot swim against the current, so they choose to leave the organization.

Figure 8 is also interesting in that the group distinctly drew the rocks at the beginning of the organizational water flow, with the tributaries starting in different

directions, implying that organizational challenges (the rocks) are causing the work to flow in many different directions. One tributary represents a spin-off of another division, and the other tributary represents businesses entering the organization. The main organization, however, is heading straight in the direction of its leadership: to the sea.

Despite the fact that Group B's drawings, like Group A's, included a majority of references and images focusing on the challenges and barriers that influenced the directional flow of the organization's work and people, Group B's drawings, unlike Group A's, also were more optimistic in that they included images of hope and reward at the end of the journey. For example, Figures 8 and 9 show the sun, trees, and flowers, meaning that although the organization was going through tough times, it was moving in the right direction. Those who drew Figure 8 explained that they took a literal approach, one that combined all of their experiences to reflect more of a historical composite of the organization and its leadership. For instance, they noted that at the bottom of their flipchart are calm images of life and growth. And although the rocks represent layoffs and the waves and white water represent uncertainty and hard times, they pointed out that at the top of the flipchart is their division president at sea, calling everyone to come to the sun and sailboats. All the participants laughed knowingly, for they were familiar with the leader and shared a common view of their organization.

Similarly, those who drew Figure 9 explained that if people in the organization were able to get through the whirlpools, then sunshine and flowers–also referred to as vacations and retirement–would be waiting for them.

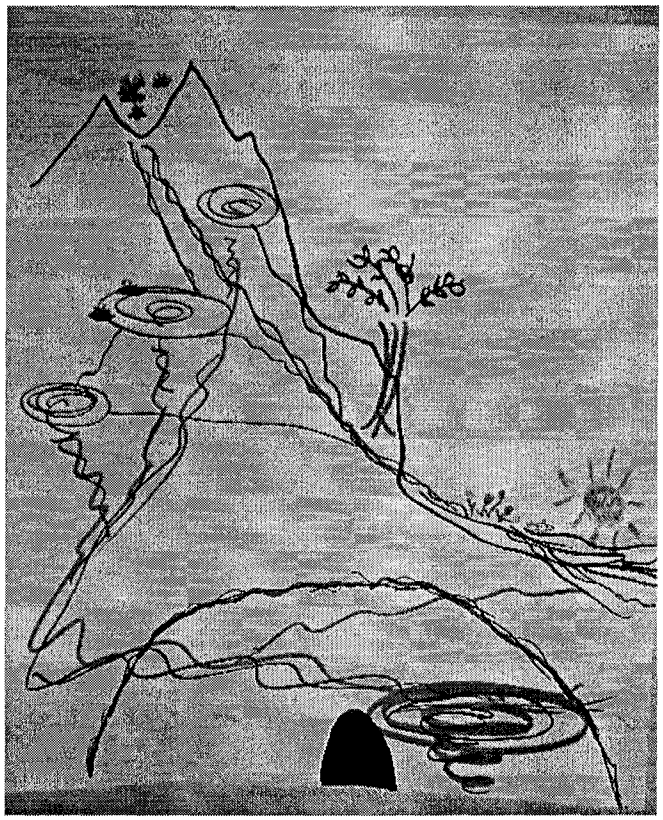

Figure 9: Group A: Flipchart.

Overall, then, although Group B seemed to view the organization as a challenging place, they also incorporated images of rewards or well-being. However, such icons appeared only when the people and the organization emerged out of the turbulent times.

Summary

Although much of the findings of the two groups are similar, there were some differences in their perceptions of the organization and its leadership, differences that seem attributable to the makeup of the two groups. Although both groups saw the organization as turbulent and fraught with challenges, the managers' icons and meanings focused more specifically on how and why things were occurring in the organization, and on the ways in which they, as representing leadership, could control the situation and prevent, remove, or maneuver around the organizational barriers. In other words, their emphasis was on strategy, as might be expected from those in leadership positions. By contrast, the other participants, who filled nonmanagerial functions, drew icons of the organization in rather elaborate detail, but as their explanations revealed, their emphasis was not on strategy as much as it was on how the barriers and work were affecting them personally. Leadership stands, quite literally on the flipcharts (see Figures 8 and 9), at the top of the drawings, above and beyond the fray below. Group B's concepts of leadership therefore seemed akin to images in Greek and Roman mythologies, which show the gods, huddled in a circle far up in the heavens, looking down below at the mere mortals scurrying around or, to

maintain the metaphor, at sea tossed hither and yon by forces over which they have no control and little understanding. Their dependency on leadership is evident, and although they do not have a clear vision of it, they do include leaders in their drawings, and they do have faith that they are being guided toward a better life, as represented by their icons of rewards: flowers, trees, sunshine, and sailboats.

The next chapter takes these findings and explores them further, especially from the perspective of the icons' meanings or objects and how these might be used to guide change initiatives at this organization and elsewhere. The chapter also provides some conclusions, speculations, and recommendations about the value of using metaphor-based activities and the implications that this study's findings have for future research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings reported in the previous chapter reveal how metaphor can be used in meaning-making activities such as the one described in this study. This chapter uses those findings to draw conclusions about the differences found between the middle-managers' (Group A) and the other participants' (Group B) concepts of their organization and its leadership, as well as some speculations about the reasons for these differences. Beyond conclusions about this particular organization, however, this chapter also draws conclusions about the efficacy of using metaphor-based activities in other organizations and guidelines for doing so. Also, I now have direct suggestions of how I can add to the practice and literature in IT. A reference of the theoretical constructs presented in Chapter 2 is provided with recommendations for future efforts to support the research. The chapter then concludes with some implications that this study may have for both practitioners and researchers, namely (a) HRD and ID and IT professionals involved in similar innovation-related communications during times of LSOC efforts, and (b) other scholars interested in extending research in this area.

Drawing a Composite Picture of the Findings: Making Meaning of the Participants' Collective Images and Concepts

In making sense of this study's findings, it may be useful to use another metaphor. If those findings are seen as puzzle pieces–or fragmentary glimpses into the participants' images of their organization and its leadership–then the following conclusions are similar to the puzzle's picture on the box. This picture, however, is an emergent one: a snapshot in time and taken only from the perspective of this study's sample population (the two groups). Whether or not this "still-life" picture accurately represents the entire organization cannot be determined from this study, yet, it provides a starting point upon which other initiatives can be developed and compared. The following conclusions pertain to general similarities and differences between the two groups in the way they attributed meaning to the icons they used. Unlike the previous chapter, which organized the findings according to the icons used in the drawings, this section focuses on the concepts or objects most often associated with the icons, as well as their interrelationship or how the pieces are connected.

Barriers or Challenges

Perhaps the main object of the groups' icons was that of the barriers or challenges they believed were present in the organization and hampering its effectiveness. In general, the barriers were considered to be either passable or impassable. Compared with Group B, the managers placed more emphasis on specific organizational barriers, such as insufficient resources, impositions by regulatory

bodies, and organizational mergers and acquisitions. Also, in the way they illustrated and talked about these, it was evident that they considered such barriers ever present and generally impassable, although much of their time necessarily had to be spent on managing those barriers. The main tension seemed to involve the extent to which the barriers were causing rifts within the organization that were so great that they affected the management of work, people, and strategies.

Although the other participants (Group B) were also cognizant of organizational barriers, their perspective, not surprisingly, was more focused on how they were affected by the barriers rather than, as for the managers, what they had to do to about the barriers. For Group B, whether or not the barriers were passable was not as much of a concern as whether someone, somewhere was at the helm, handling the situation and guiding the organization into smoother waters.

Work

Like barriers, the object of work was also framed as being either manageable or unmanageable. Organizational work was typically referred to as the flow of the organization, a flow that was often impacted by organizational challenges, changes, and barriers. For Group A, whose members were responsible for interdependent and key functions, the primary emphasis was on knowing how best to manage, foresee, and avoid or prepare for organizational barriers, represented in their drawings by icons of rocks, logs, logjams, and turbulent waves.

Resources

To both groups, resources usually meant people, and good leadership primarily involved how those resources or people were managed. Depending on what was currently happening in the organization, resources were represented in their drawings as either aligned or, as more often depicted, misaligned, particularly when the organization encountered challenges or barriers. Many references were made to having too many resources working on the wrong things or not enough resources to manage the recent challenges or changes in the organization. The groups concurred that resources were extremely important to them; however, they explained that tensions rose when resources were misaligned because then people suffered, as illustrated by the dead and dying fish and fish bones in their drawings, and by the skinny streams and water leaks that deprived the fish of sustenance.

Strategy

Related to the objects of barriers, work, and resources, and indeed the key to them all, was another object: the strategy of the organization at that time. Strategy was represented as being either on or off target. Essentially, strategy can capsize if market, customer, and regulatory constraints take an unexpected turn, thus impacting the work and resources in the organization. In their drawings, icons of water, especially streams and their flow and direction, were used to signify organizational strategy. That strategy was affected by barriers (e.g., rocks and logjams) in the

streams, and, in turn, strategy affected resources and was closely tied to how well the fish, or resources, were doing.

As might be expected, it was the managers who were most concerned with how to translate organizational strategy changes into everyday work practices. In general, the managers found this transition to be the most challenging, problematic, and painful. As one remarked, "How do you prepare your middle management to make quick adjustments within their organization, translate those adjustments, and lead their people through the change?" Because leadership's vision and strategy take time to penetrate the organization and its people, managers believed they needed faster, better ways for articulating and communicating planned changes and how to implement them without negatively impacting their people. Lightening was used in their drawings to represent times when strategy was not working but met with struggle.

Rewards

As indicated in Chapter 4, references to rewards (for instance, vacations and retirement), represented by icons of sun, sailboats, flowers, and trees, were most prevalent in the drawings of Group B and were not accounted for in the drawings of Group A. As for why this was the case, it may be that the managers, by virtue of their positions, were more concerned and busy with the details of implementing organizational strategy than with the more mundane, tangible benefits that are often the focus of nonmanagerial personnel. This speculation is supported by the managers'

representations of the opposite of rewards: for example, the drawing showing "management pumping the water out of the lake where the organization was met with major organizational challenges" and thus failing to adjust strategy, resulting in people being deprived of rewards, jumping ship and going elsewhere, or perhaps being let go. Managers' concerns seemed more directed at keeping the boat afloat and aimed in the right direction–a necessary condition for rewards to exist at all. Perhaps for the managers, meeting that challenge was in itself an important reward.

By contrast, the nonmanagerial personnel (Group B) tended to have faith that if they did their jobs well, they would someday arrive at some halcyon place of sunshine and contentment. Although managers may share that view and seek the same kind of rewards, it was evidently not forefront in their minds (or images) when illustrating and describing *their organization and its leadership*. Perhaps the reason for this was the focus imposed by the meaning-making activity itself, a focus that the managers perhaps took more literally than did the other group. If this speculation is true, then knowing what motivates employees and keeps up morale is also important information for leadership to keep in mind when planning and communicating change initiatives; it must become part of strategy.

Summary

The purpose of the meaning-making activity was to use metaphor to trigger "aha" moments among the participants. Those "aha" realizations were triggered by the images or icons they drew and their explanations of them during which they

negotiated meaning. An important conclusion of this study, then, is that it confirms the importance of using signs or icons in the meaning-making process. As Morgan (1998) puts it, by reflecting upon their own organization and what it looked like to them, the participants were able to put their heads above the frenzy of organizational activity and see the contradictions, paradoxes, and complexities that are shaping organizational life, even while they are actively engaged in it. Although an organization may, ideally, hope that the "aha" moments are positive confirmations of the status quo or verifications of how well the organization and its leadership are doing, one of the main values of this innovation activity is that it surfaces employees' true perceptions of organizational realities versus idealisms. It furthermore uncovers areas of similarity and difference among different groups or, in other words, the degree to which they really share common meanings.

Despite differences and despite challenges that can seem to be unmanageable, leaders are expected to rise to the occasion–to lead and manage the organization as if they were sailing the tide of a rapid stream. And this was the main conclusion of shared meaning that resulted from the activity. In general, managers' drawings and concepts were much more detailed and specific than were those of the other participants, who relied mainly on generalizations and a more abstract rendering of the "big picture." This is not surprising, as Group B typically does not have much direct connection to upper and senior management as does Group A, the managers. Perhaps as a result of this, the managers' meanings of leadership came more readily to them, with little struggle to explain their drawings. Furthermore, being managers, they

shared similar challenges, and because of this, they did not have to negotiate meaning as much as the other participants did.

Another difference is that the managers were less focused on questioning where they were going than were those in Group B; rather, the managers reflected more on what to do or how to react to the constant changes of direction due to organizational challenges and barriers. Members of Group B, on the other hand, were more focused on their own individual experiences, and struggled when trying to frame answers to the question of what their leadership looked like. Although they expressed that they "do not know where they are headed," they had confidence that there was some direction from above, as revealed in one drawing showing, quite literally, a manager standing far above the chaotic waters and beckoning them to his sailboat afloat in the sunny, calm ocean. As for the mechanics of the voyage itself and how they were going to cross treacherous waters, these were not nearly as much of a concern to them as they were to Group A. This, too, is not surprising, given the nonmanagerial roles of the participants in Group B.

Finally, it is important to note that these conclusions pertain only to this one organization within the context of these participants at the particular time the activity was conducted. It is a snapshot in time, but the picture on the puzzle box is not static; it is more like a movie, with the scene continually unfolding and changing. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that realizing and understanding such similarities and differences in the perspectives of organizational members, such as those revealed in the present study, is important to any organization's leadership and communication.

Although everyone may see the same things, they may interpret them differently by virtue of their position within the organization. Hence, depending on their lenses, they may view the same barriers, work, resources, strategy, and rewards, but what they mean to them may be different because they affect them in different ways. Although this study did not involve having the two groups get together to discuss their drawings and share their perspectives, doing so might be an effective way to extend the study and provide richer data upon which to create an even clearer picture of the organization, which could support HealthCare's LSOC initiatives.

Recommendations for how other HR and ID and IT professionals can create similar activities in their own organizations are provided later in this chapter. Because the use of metaphor is central to this study, it is important to first address some conclusions about its efficacy, along with suggestions for choosing and using an appropriate metaphor.

Metaphors as a Means for Creating Shared Meanings of an Innovation

This study's conclusions are well aligned with the literature on metaphor (see Chapter 2) and confirm that using metaphors is a viable way to help create shared meaning among group members. When, as in this study, people are asked to reflect on what leadership looks like in their organization, it is essential that they have a means to help them articulate and explain their thoughts. Metaphors serve as a good tool for helping them do so, for underlying them are culturally shared concepts that provide the basis for communication. According to Armenakis et al. (1996), symbols and

metaphors can effectively serve as primers for cognitive and behavioral change. Using a metaphor in the activity under study helped provide a common language or framework for expressing otherwise abstract concepts.

For example, had the activity reported in this study been conducted without first introducing a common metaphor (in this case, a stream), it is likely that the participants would not have been able to express themselves as readily, because with the metaphor, they had access to familiar images and words that the stream metaphor naturally evoked. Without the metaphor, participants probably would have draw upon their own metaphors to express themselves, thus causing confusion rather than cohesion of thought. Support for this speculation is provided by Sapienza (1985), who found that the use of metaphor helped at the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional levels because of its concrete, picture-like nature, thus making it a powerful tool in communication.

Characteristics of Metaphors

Metaphors have several qualities that make them especially effective in understanding perceptions about organizations and their leadership. First, metaphor is a way of seeing things "as if" they were something else by drawing upon common characteristics (or *indices*, to use Peirce's [cited in Buchler, 1940] term) of two otherwise unrelated things. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) describe it, metaphor helps in understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another. As tools for communication and meaning making, metaphors are mental pictures used to

conceptualize and explain vague or unfamiliar phenomena. Metaphors can refocus the familiar and show it in a new light, which is a necessary first step in the adoption or change process.

Second, metaphors provoke vivid images that make comparisons between past and future actions more tangible. Metaphor is an integral part of the thought process, and some, such as Clancy (1989), contend that metaphor can improve understanding so long as the right metaphor is used or created. Third, depending on the choice of metaphor, metaphors can connote meaning on a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral level in a holistic way (Sackmann, 1989).

Benefits of Metaphors

In this study, the middle managers and other participants were introduced to the innovation of leadership via the metaphor of a stream in order to frame their mindset and prepare them for the activity that followed. James and Minnis (2004) explain, "human beings have a limited tolerance for ambiguity" (p. 24); thus, the activity depended on using metaphorical language and symbolism to help resolve any ambiguity with the term *leadership*. The warm-up exercise helped prepare the participants for expressing, in their own words, the elements of a stream and, subsequently, the metaphor's associated images and meanings as represented in their flipchart drawings.

This quite literal "drawing out" what leadership and organizations looked like was also valuable. Drawing on one metaphor theme and negotiating the meanings

along the way helped to create a shared composite of what leadership looks like in organizations. As Vince (1995) observed, the power of drawing was "not only in the diagnostic power of the images themselves but also in the contextual and collaborative discussions and developments that emerge as a result of them" (p. 12). For example, in this study, as discussed previously in this chapter, five major themes–organizational barriers, resources, work, strategy, and rewards–emerged through the participants' drawings and discussion of them.

The following delves into more detail concerning the value of metaphor in the preliminary, introductory parts of the activity and how it laid the groundwork–both verbally and visually–for the main meaning-making activity.

Verbal Expressions of Metaphor

The warm-up activity created the verbal framework for what was to follow. For instance, by realizing that they all had similar thoughts, associations, and terms when thinking about elements of a stream, the participants found other associated metaphors they could then use as additional supporting signs and meanings. Thus, later on in the session when they created their drawings, they could more easily describe what leadership looked like to them by using symbols or icons in their visuals, as well as find words to explain the concepts related to the icons or what Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940) calls the icon's *object*. Connecting the two–the icon

and its object–were the characteristics the two shared, or what Peirce calls the icon's *indices*.

Visual Expressions of Metaphor

As also a part of providing a framework for the main activity, the Blanchard® video provided the visual framework for the main activity by showing the participants detailed expressions of a stream and by demonstrating to them how language describing the stream can translate well to language used to describe organizations. The video validated many of the terms and phrases the participants had, on their own, previously suggested during the warm-up exercise. In doing so, the video reinforced other metaphors already in the participants' minds as they contemplated the larger metaphor of the stream. Hence, both the warm-up exercise and the video provided fertile ground for the success of the main activity: the flipchart drawings and the participants' explanations of them as they described their organization. The video validated similar terms and phrases used in the warm-up exercise, contributing to the usefulness of the stream metaphor as a way to describe organizations. Providing a working metaphor is necessary for shared meaning making (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), and these preliminary activities helped confirm that the stream metaphor was working.

Metaphoric Drawings as a Way of Facilitating Verbal Expressions of Meaning

The main activity reversed this process by asking participants to *first draw or visualize* their organization on the flipcharts and *then to verbalize the meaning* of the

visuals. Swan (1995) points out that providing visual imagery helps with cognitive meaning making. It was necessary that this training activity incorporate some kind of visual cognitive-mapping technique that would help facilitate shared cognitions among the participants. Once the activity began, their drawings and dialogue helped to reveal some underlying experiences. For example, participants immediately referenced metaphoric images in their drawings and metaphoric terms to help reflect those experiences and describe their organization and its leadership. Thus, similar to the findings in other studies (Kearney & Hyle, 2004; Vince, 1995; Zuboff, 1988), a significant conclusion of this study is that drawing can be an important vehicle for helping people tap into their emotional truths and for helping them articulate feelings and observations that were implicit and initially difficult to define or express verbally.

Recommendations Concerning the Selection and Use of Metaphors

For the participants in this study, metaphor was a viable technique to use in the classroom. However, finding working metaphors may be difficult for the average manager as leader in an organization. Also, providing video explanations or high-end graphics may not always be possible or fit into a fast-paced organization. Therefore, flexible metaphors that are easy to convey or that are frequently used in an organization are more likely to be successful–for example, perhaps, metaphors of a stream, nature, journey, or weather.

Choosing the right metaphor is essential for creating shared meaning. However, if the metaphor is inappropriate, it may backfire. Illes and Ritchie (1999)

suggest avoiding cynical metaphors, metaphors that reinforce undesirable behavior. An example might be using the island metaphor in an academic institution because it would likely serve to only reinforce the notion that departments are adrift at sea and not working with one another. Whether or not that is indeed the case in a particular organization, using metaphors commonly associated with negative stereotypes tend to perpetuate those stereotypes and may be counterproductive in change efforts. For these reasons, choosing a neutral metaphor unassociated with preconceived judgments about certain people and organizations is best, for only then can real insights through shared meaning be realized. As a rule, neutral metaphors that connote synergy are a good choice.

Another recommendation is to use a single, extended metaphor. In this study's activity, without providing the participants with a common metaphor, their meaning making would have been hampered by a shared-meaning event that could have had a number of working metaphors circling the participants' expressions of their understanding, thus potentially confusing and conflicting with each other and failing to assist in creating *shared meanings* to move their understanding forward.

Organizational Change

Because organizational change was a selected theoretical construct to this study, it is important to next address some conclusions about organizational change. This section provides observations from the research provided in Chapter 2, including next steps for building upon the review of literature. As instructional technologists,

support LSOC initiatives aimed at planned change, it is important to highlight the key observations made about the change literature provided in Chapter 2.

First, Rogers's (2003) theory explains the factors influencing the adoption of innovations (otherwise known as management ideas and concepts) such as "quality," "leadership," or "values," depicting it as a process. In his theory, Rogers describes five phases of the innovation-decision process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. So, as presented in Chapter 2, Rogers's ideas associated with his theory include three of his premises or generalizations and have important implications for the present study, particularly for how ideas and concepts provided by leadership (also known as innovations) are shared during an LSOC initiative, such as this leadership-training program:

> Generalization 5-13: Mass media channels are relatively more important at the knowledge stage, and interpersonal channels are relatively more important at the persuasion stage in the innovation-decision process. (p. 205)
>
> Generalization 5-15: Mass media channels are relatively more important than interpersonal channels for earlier adopters than for late adopters. (p. 211)
>
> Generalization 6-3: The complexity of an innovation, as perceived by members of a social system, is negatively related to its rate of adoption. (p. 257)

This diffusion research is a particular type of communication research, and in this study, the planned change of leadership messages is designed and prepared by program stakeholders (i.e., upper management) along with strategic management strategies. In the training context, these messages are crafted carefully, prepared for, and designed using the metaphoric approach of shared meaning via intrapersonal communication methods. This is highly supportive of the research provided by

Rogers by creating the opportunity to determine collectively what leadership looks like. By these means, the persuasion phase of communicating or thus creating an opportunity for key managers to create the shared meaning of leadership, the planned change messages create an opportunity for the "aha" moments to occur in training. This is also the key message for which the management training is designed. As a result, the interpersonal messages are revealed, and not only are managers left with the conclusion that leadership is similar to elements of a stream, but also key icons and symbols of meaning about leadership and the organization are revealed and shared.

Furthermore, Rogers (2003) supports the concept that at the knowledge stage, mass media is appropriate for the diffusion of the innovation. At HealthCare, this is linked to the broad marketing of the leadership program and what the offerings include. However, explanation or discovery of what leadership means is not addressed at this communication channel. Instead, the persuasion to adopt, invent, or create the concepts of leadership are dealt with on an interpersonal level within the context of the classroom stream activity. From my observation, this approach is supportive of Rogers's theory, thus allowing for the meaning-making process to occur and cement the common, shared meanings of what leadership looks like within the HealthCare organizations. In no way can this concept of innovation be told to anyone; instead, it must be created, discovered, and shared, as it were, as a result of the shared meaning-making metaphor activity. The marshaling of the signs used to explain what leadership looks like helps to describe the meaning of leadership and what the organization looks like because of its leadership. As stated in the literature, these

generalizations are especially important in adopting new ideas, concepts, and meanings within organizations because communication at all stages of adoption creates, defines, and sustains culture and can support organizational initiatives (Van Tiem et al., 2001). For example, Generalizations 5-13 and 5-15 are key factors in helping implement any change initiative, as provided in this study.

Second, another observation in this study is that marketing for the leadership program is similar to Generalization 5-13 in that the marketing and communication is aimed at a wider audience, making it aware of the training program, its key objectives, and the expectations for attendance. Persuasion to attend and "buy in" to the management and leadership messages and approaches provided in the program are implemented by using the interpersonal channel of communication and having participants attend after sponsorship from their direct managers. Essentially, all the program messages, skills, and expectations designed into the course are presented to the participants via the interpersonal method and are re-enforced by the participants' managers back on the job. In turn, the managers and leaders need to carry those messages into their own organizations within HealthCare, thereby putting Rogers's (2003) research into practice. Therefore, HR professionals and OD and ID practioners involved in LSOC efforts should realize that at the beginning of the change initiative, interpersonal communication channels are going to be more effective in persuading the organization to change and make meaning of the change. Thus, at the early stages, communications should be more personal.

Third, large organizational change communications, such as leadership programs and related messages, must be simple to understand, using appropriate and various visual communication channels (e.g., printed materials, Websites, e-mails, live messages). Similarly, the study supports Generalization 6-3 in that large, complex companies need to find simple, systematic, and sustainable communications that support their LSOC initiatives that can influence the adoption of many implementations occurring in an organization, such as changing processes, rewards and recognition systems, mergers, reorganization, and organizational strategies. Again, helping managers get the vision and shared meaning right at the interpersonal stage of implementation and change helps build shared meaning among the group. This was evident in that both Groups A and B were synthesizing similar icons and symbols used to create shared meaning of what leadership looks like within the organization. The simplistic approach, using the stream metaphor and drawing exercise, helps to relieve the complexities and present the meaning in light, fanciful descriptions so that shared meaning occurs within the groups.

Also, observations in this study were similar to those in the to Woodman et al. (2001) study. Their findings showed that organizations had conflicting interpretations, influence, and deep structures related to the implemented change and that these could be attributed to various contextual settings and a lack of common ground among stakeholders and managers. In this study, middle managers (Group A) and other participants (Group B) came to similar meanings but represented different perspectives based upon their role in the organization. For example, the middle

managers approached the description and meaning of leadership as the ability to deal with change. The other participants seemed removed from this view and expected upper management to help navigate the change. Again, this is an obvious conclusion given their positions within the organization, but it is one that is worth noting for future LSOC initiative rollouts.

Swan (1995) agrees with Woodman et al. (2001) that organizations are socially constructed and that organizational actors or employees approach innovations, including technical ones, from their own cognitive views and belief systems. Again, middle managers and other participants hold both different and similar perceptions of leadership and largely supported this. Both Woodman et al. (2001) and Swan (1995) maintain that the interaction between cognition and organizational actions is one for further research because organizational actions are embedded in context and the environment, which change over time. Swan concludes that mapping methodologies and semiotic analysis are worthy approaches for understanding how managers and employees think in order to generate negotiations during implementation and change initiatives. understanding more about how managers think will aid the leaders, managers, instructional technologists, HRD professionals, and organizational development and/or performance technologists who need to implement and communicate innovations. In turn, helping them understand more fully the deep structures and meanings that are held within the organization is advantageous.

Therefore, it is imperative to understand how different parts of the organization have subcultures and represent various perceptions, as supported by Schein (1992).

Thus, as instructional technologists, HRD professionals, and organizational development and/or performance technologists support LSOC, they must go further toward understanding a group's deep structures, values, and beliefs, for these are what help create the type of new synthesis that can occur at only the communicative level.

Culture

Much was provided in Chapter 2 regarding Schein's (1999) definition of culture: "sum total of all the shared, taken-for-granted assumptions that a group has learned throughout its history" (p. 29). In essence, the literature provides explicit reasons why knowing more about the cultures and subcultures in which employees work is important. The culture of any organization is a reflection of the deeply held values and behaviors of relatively few individuals, those of the CEO, and maybe a handful of senior executives in larger companies, similar to the case with HealthCare. In the case of this study, I present the observations that were similar to the literature provided in Chapter 2.

In this study, specifically the sponsors responsible for the selection and presentation of the leadership messages to be sent, the activity was placed to encourage the managers to realize that change impacts organization and its people in many places, thus creating opportunities to manage and lead the organization they are responsible for leading. These "aha" messages were present so that the new managers could make meaning of what leadership looked like in their organization. However, as a result of this study, there is more to learn about the meanings created that can assist

instructional technologists, HRD professionals, and organizational development and/or performance technologists understand the present culture regarding leadership for future change interventions.

As Schein (1992) states,

> A deeper understanding of cultural issues in groups and organizations is necessary to decipher what goes on in them but, even more important, to identify what may be the priority issues for leaders and leadership. Organizational cultures are created in part by leaders, and one of the most decisive functions of leadership is the creation, the management, and sometimes even the destruction of culture. (p. 5)

An observation supporting Schein is that it is important for managers and leaders to know about their organization before embarking on LSOC initiatives. This study shows that by tapping into existing data-collection events, managers and those assisting in the development of LSOC initiatives could provide more insight into how subgroups within a culture make meaning of concepts and actions within their organization. Schein (1992) also noted, "Organizations tend to break down into subunits based on technology, products, markets, geographies, and occupations. The subunits are more likely to develop their own subcultures because of their shared core technologies and learning experiences" (p. 3).

For example, participants' motivations during change can differ by virtue of what responsibility they have in the organization. Both Schein (1992) and Rogers (2003) recognize that implementation, communication, and effecting change within an organization require the acknowledgement of both approaches and the understanding of shared beliefs. This study supports

Schein and Rogers by demonstrating how leadership meanings are shared within Group A and Group B. Future research requires that those supporting LSOC initiatives (instructional technologists, HRD professionals, and organizational development and/or performance technologists) become cultural anthropologists by learning more about the shared meaning, the shared social reality, and the set of shared and taken-for-granted assumptions commonly held by a group or subgroup (Schein, 1996). As emphasized in Chapter 1, if leaders and managers are to manage effectively, then they must become more aware of the shared social reality in which they want change to be implemented.

Second, the literature in Chapter 2 discussed culture change and the critical role of leaders who try to change or influence the behavior of subordinates and who often encounter resistance to change at a level that seems beyond reason. For example, observations of some of the lead-the-leader activities suggest that many think that sometimes department members seem to be more interested in fighting with each other than in getting the job done. Schein (1992; 1995; 1999) states that managers must work from a more anthropological model, and coming to understand more about the culture is one way to do that. In the study, the composite flipcharts tell the story of what leadership looks like using the stream metaphor, showing that when change happens in one area, it impacts another. Again, this "aha" gets at the importance of knowing more about the perceptions and deeply held beliefs of a

subgroup during times of change. For example, middle managers noted that a change was causing their organization to shift resources, both employee-selected turnover and resource-management activities, thus making it increasingly difficult to manage the current operations during these changes. By knowing the state of affairs in the organizations, various change approaches may be crafted for various subgroups.

Third, the groups' articulation of the meanings using metaphors, icons, and symbols help to understand the communication approaches at various stages of implementation, thus using much of Rogers's (2003) research. Schein's (1992) key ideas apply directly to the challenge presented in Chapter 1. Primarily, these are his three levels of culture: exposed values, shared meaning, and root metaphors–all of which are manifested in the signs and symbols that organizations use to create and maintain shared meaning. In the case of studying culture, theories about the development of signs, symbols, and metaphors (that is, artifacts) used in communication and/or training alongside LSOC initiatives are especially needed. Therefore, more research may be needed to examine which icons, symbols, and organizational metaphors would assist during organizational change for HealthCare. Such studies may contribute to the overall body of literature as to effect and process of data collection, selections, and implementation success factors.

Fourth, another observation that proved similar to the literature was a need for shared language and mental models for what is real. Schein (1995)

states that there is a need to focus on the dialogue and social constructions of reality in groups and subgroups, to create common realities. In this study, the metaphorical meaning, icons, and symbols linked the common shared understanding and deeply held beliefs. For example, other participants (Group B) drew dark clouds and lightning to represent uncertainty during the times of mergers and acquisitions. This alluded to the shared beliefs that these times are stressful because of the uncertainty and confusion held during those times in the organization. Both Schein (1992) and Rogers (2003) support that for leaders to manage through these times they need to achieve shared meaning and consensus, shared language, and shared assumptions. Especially during times of change, most communication breakdowns between people result from their lack of shared language awareness that, in the first place, they are making different assumptions about meaning categories (Schein, 1995). Because culture is a set of shared assumptions, the contextual meaning of cultural assumptions can create a vehicle for understanding.

For example, one study by Armenakis, Fredenberger, Cherones, and Field (1995) used symbolism in organizational change initiatives and developed items that were clearly more expressive and more technical in order to assess the extent of symbolism used in LSOC initiatives. Additionally, these symbols represented the actions necessary to create readiness for change, implement corrective actions, and encourage adoption and institutionalization of the changes (Armenakis et al., 1995). By identifying the cultural symbols

that depicted readiness within the organization, the change agents (managers) were better prepared to create readiness for change, implement corrective actions, and encourage adoption and institutionalization of the changes. As a result of this study, knowing more about the metaphors, shared meaning, and symbols used first may assist in LSOC implementations. Further research within organizations during implementation using metaphors, shared meaning, and symbols can help to build upon the existing literature.

Also, because basic underlying assumptions, meanings, and mental models are the unconscious essence of culture, it is at this level where individuals must challenge and question their shared basic assumptions and meaning (Schein, 1992; 1995). The stream activity studied helps to make the unconscious conscious. The participants learned more about the meanings of leadership and what the organization looks like because of it. Change needs to appreciate and address a variety of potential and influential unconscious processes going on in the organizations. Having a deeper meaning of organizational cultures and understanding culture as a common thread among beliefs helps individuals to perceive and understand organizational patterns within the organization.

At HealthCare, culture is studied using organizational surveys, but it is recommended that interpersonal follow-up with subgroups be conducted before LSOC begins. Again, Keeton and Mengistu (1992) found that organizational culture varies across management, nationality, and demographic characteristics. Therefore, it is important to understand more about how different levels within an organization may

have different understandings and thus define different organizational shared meanings and cultures (Helms & Stern, 2001). Thus, studies that examine the elements affecting employees' perceptions of organizational culture are important to organizational research. As seen in this study and supported by the research mentioned in Chapter 2, the differences between middle managers and other participants may be subtle but may make all the difference when implementing change within a large, complex organization, such as HealthCare.

Fifth, another observation of the study supported the claim that culture defines the shared frame of reference that typifies organizations and guides members' perceptions and behavior. Symbols–and the meanings assigned to them–are usually created within that cultural context (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997; Schein, 1985; Trice & Beyer, 1993). Daft and Weick (1984) also presented the idea that because organizations are interpretive systems, their cultures can be understood through their symbols and metaphor use and by how they are used in the sense-making process of a group. The flipcharts used in both middle managers' (Group A) and other participants' (Group B) composite shared meanings and largely support the research outcomes.

In conclusion, the next step to support literature may include combining the diffusion communication channels, metaphors based upon collected data that further explain the culture of a specific group. Indeed, this study helps to begin that journey, to support further research both with the next steps of HealthCare and with the body of literature at large.

Semiotics

This study's conclusions are well aligned with the literature on semiotics (see Chapter 2) and confirm that categorizing meaning is a viable way to help capture and categorize meaning among group members. Semiotic theory also links the processing of signs or symbols and their relationship, how knowledge is constructed, and how meaning is made. It relates to both external (social, cultural) and internal (mental, cognitive) interpretation. Peirce's (1985) theory and categories of signs provided a theoretical foundation for the study. His categories of signs–icons, indexes, and symbols–serve as a heuristic model for this study's categorization of images or drawings as well as the interpretation of the meanings of those images. In this study of metaphor use, his theory of semiotics is also important because it accounts for how language, knowledge, experience, and context are mediated through the use of signs.

Using Peirce's Theory to Identify the Meanings of Leadership

As mentioned before, in this study, the findings are similar to puzzle pieces–or fragmentary glimpses into the participants' images of their organization and its leadership–similar to the puzzle's picture on the box. This picture is an emergent one: a snapshot in time and taken only from the perspective of this study's sample population (the two groups). Whether or not this "still-life" picture represents the entire organizations meanings accurately cannot be determined from this study, yet it provides a starting point upon which to understand meanings of leadership, which other initiatives can support. So although Peirce (cited in Houser & Kloesel, 1992)

supports that his sign theory helps to define reality, it must be recognized that the reality is not a static one and that these meanings are situated in context.

In this study, designs help identify the meanings of leadership and what the organization looks like. However, in support of Peirce's theory, one's own interpretation of a sign can be a sign for another, and the other's interpretation of that sign can be a sign for yet someone else. This relationship may continue until the final interpretation in reached because the interpretant itself is a sign (Houser & Kloesel, 1992). This was evident during the streaming activity as the participants collectively drew and negotiated the signs (meanings), resulting in agreed, shared-meaning composite flipchart drawings and descriptions of what leadership looks like within HealthCare. As a result, the way in which the participants created meaning–or determined what the organization and its leadership looks like–depended on how they marshaled the signs associated with the overarching metaphor (or *icon*, to use Peirce's term) of the stream.

Peirce's (1985) theory is used to capture how participants in the activity create the object of the sign as the idea or concept upon which the sign is built. The interpretant of the sign comprehends the meaning of the sign through the emotions, energy, or logic it conveys. This was evident in the meaning-making process during the stream activity and further supports Peirce (cited in Houser & Kloesel, 1992) in the following quote:

> The object and the interpretant are thus merely the two correlates of the sign; the one being antecedent, the other consequent of the sign. Signs signify something and name something else . . . while that which it is intended to name must be ascertained not from the term itself but *by*

> *observation of the context or other attendant circumstances of its utterance.* (p. 429, emphasis added)

Furthermore, these observations made in context were evident within each group. For example, as was evident in each group's explanation of meaning, often, a single image simultaneously meant different things to them. Although the meanings may seem to suggest a one-to-one correspondence between a sign or image and its meaning, the groups' discussions revealed that an image might reflect rich, complex concepts–sometimes overlapping and interrelated, at other times more distinct and specific. Similarly, this is the case with Peirce's sign system of icon, index, and symbol.

Categorizing the Meanings of Leadership

Icon, index, and symbol are important in this study because they provide a useful way to categorize collected data concerning the initial meanings of leadership. In the case of *symbols*, what gives them meaning are not the things or words themselves but the ideas associated with them. In Peirce's words, people "realize the idea connected with the word; it [the word or symbol] does not, in itself, identify those things . . . instead we are able to imagine those things and have associated the word with them" (p. 9). The meaning-making activity in this study is supported by Peirce's theory in that ideas connected with the participants' explanations and drawings were evident and confirmed by the negotiations among the participants, thus confirming the meaning making of what leadership looks like within the organization.

Icons, Indices, and Symbols Used to Identify Meanings of Leadership

Most relevant to this study is that Peirce cites metaphors as examples of icons based on parallelism between a sign and its object or meaning. In the streaming activity, the participant drawings supported Peirce's examples of icons as they included paintings (drawings) or material images that may stand for ideas, for example, the drawing of water representing the idea of work. This metaphor, water as representing work, stood for the ideas of work–represented with various signs and shades of meaning, depending on its direction, movement, or other attributes. For example, straight, smooth lines represented calmness when organizational work was flowing normally and without much disruption in some areas. However, when the organization encountered a challenge or barrier, the water icons changed from straight lines to circles and then to multicircular swirls–referred to as *whirlpools*–indicating disruptions in the workflow. A metaphor such as "water as representing work" is recognized as meaningful not because the two are identical (water = work) but because there are inherent similarities between water in a stream and work within an organization. For example, they both have high levels of volume, they both suggest stops and starts, and so on. These kinds of icons excite analogous sensations in the mind of what the icon may try to represent, thus identifying its meaning and making it a shared one in the context of the training activity.

An *index* refers directly to something, is of the same nature as the thing, and is connected to the object by virtue of what it does, not what it means. It asserts nothing by itself, just as the hands on a clock mean nothing if apart from the clock. Peirce

explains, "Indices may be distinguished from other signs" in "that they have no significant resemblance to their objects" (p. 113). In the context of this study, observational activity is important in order for indexicality to be completed. Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940) argues an index is a sign because of the dynamical connection with the object and with "the sense of memory of the person for whom it serves as a sign" (p. 107). This was quite relevant in the stream-drawing activity as participants drew an image but pointed to it to emphasize its meaning. However, of all the meanings identified for leadership, few could be indexes alone in that they could not represent the meanings of leadership simply by themselves without the context. Much of the meanings were signs in that they related to icons or symbols symbiotically, as supported by Peirce's theory.

Symbols, on the other hand, leaned on the index and icon meanings in that they represented the associated meanings. For example, Peirce (cited in Buchler, 1940) further explains that "A symbol is a sign naturally fit to declare that the set of objects which is denoted by whatever set of indices may be in certain ways attached to it is represented by an icon associated with it" (p. 113). The following citation helps to explain the relationship:

> Symbols grow. They come into being by development out of other signs, particularly from icons, or from mixed signs partaking of the nature of icons and symbols. We think only in signs. These mental signs are of mixed nature; the symbol-parts of them are called concepts. If a man makes a new symbol, it is by thoughts involving concepts. (p. 115)

A symbol, for Peirce, is closely related to icon and index, as a mixture of index and icon (for example, in the sentence "This snow is white," "this snow" is index and "is

white" is icon). A constituent of a symbol may be an index or an icon. Symbols become associated with their meanings by usage. Such are most words and phrases and speeches, all used in context of the shared meaning-making activity. Peirce's semiotical viewpoint implies that all we can really do as interpreters is to observe or note the meanings that things already have, as established in the context of the middle managers (Group A) and other participants (Group B).

Recommendations for Practitioners Involved in LSOC Initiatives

Although the previous sections were aimed at establishing the viability of using metaphors supporting culture, change, and semiotic theories in meaning-making activities, this section focuses on some recommendations for doing so, given this study's conclusions. In particular, it addresses practical suggestions for HRD, instructional design, and IT professionals responsible for designing innovation-related activities and communications during times of LSOC efforts. These recommendations are based on three premises.

The first premise is that rich data presents itself in many areas of a company, and training courses are often the place where members of an organization struggle with challenging exercises to encourage them to think and behave differently. The second premise is that IT professionals who support LSOC efforts need to collect and analyze data so they can support change efforts. And the third premise is that adoption of change is largely due to how change innovations are communicated. As demonstrated in this study, all of these premises implicate how meanings are created;

what icons are created and presented; and what meanings are attributed to them by marshaling of signs, icons, and symbols so that IT professionals designing innovation-related communications can support an organization's LSOC initiatives.

The first and foremost recommendation is that instructional designers, instructional technologists, and OD and HRD practitioners should consider designing shared-meaning-making activities for workshops and training courses that include a working metaphor, thus allowing class participants to discuss and draw out meanings. As demonstrated in this study, metaphor enables people to create a shared meaning of an idea, concept, or innovation. Designing more activities that allow for meaningful sense-making is advantageous for designers for a couple of reasons. First, the participants who have a chance to engage in such activities are allowed the processing time to make meaning with others and negotiate the meaning-making for a specific outcome. Second, byproducts of the activity produce valuable data that give insight into how the participants view, perceive, and make sense of new ideas, concepts, or innovations. This data can prove valuable to an organization and support future LSOC initiatives involving sense-making and meaning-making learning activities.

A second recommendation is for designers to investigate whether shared-meaning-making activities are possible with larger audiences, perhaps even of 1,000 participants or more, for a whole-systems approach. It may be organizationally desirable to gather input and data from such activities on a larger scale, using more participants in less time.

Third, based upon the outcomes of this study, a manager- and senior-leader toolkit on how to use metaphors to create shared meaning might be designed. The toolkit could include lessons learned from this or other studies, which would assist managers and leaders in designing, facilitating, and analyzing shared meaning and in using the data to reshape, recycle, reinforce, and reinstitutionalize desired change within their organizations in an effort to support their leadership initiatives. Practitioners could further help facilitate toolkit use by assisting senior leaders in choosing and using relevant metaphors and thought-provoking questions. The practitioners might also become involved in the sessions as cofacilitators with senior leaders by, for example, developing "warm-up" activities for using the metaphor to frame the activity's language and dialogue and developing the "drawing-out" element of the activity to create shared meaning by drawings and verbal explanations of their meaning. These drawings could be useful to the leaders as they continue to build upon the shared meaning and share and implement their visions, strategies, and plans. Finally, ID and IT professionals could provide facilitation skills to assist leaders with encouraging participants to "teach-back" and explain their meanings.

Recommendations for Future Research

In addition to this study's practical implications for HRD, IT, and ID professionals within organizations, this research also points to several possible avenues of study for scholars interested in extending this research or in applying its methodology to various areas of investigation.

Using International Participants

This study might be replicated with international audiences. The activity used within the present study is part of the company's New Leader Program, which is implemented worldwide. There are future research opportunities to conduct the study with participants from Europe, Asia, Japan, and Middle Eastern countries. Research questions might be the same as used in this study, and the outcomes could be compared to those of this study. Using various groups from the organization's international sites might reveal cultural differences in the ways the various groups respond to the questions or even the images they create. In such research, the overall purpose is comparative. Research questions might therefore include the following:

1. What are the similarities and differences between the U.S. and international middle managers and nonmanagerial personnel in their meanings of leadership?

2. What meanings do they assign to leadership-related images during the meaning-making process?

3. How do the meanings they create relate to the organizationally acceptable meanings?

4. Are there any different implications of the meanings created for international IT professionals designing innovation-related communications, for instance, in the interpretations of the visuals presented or in the visualizations created themselves?

Using Created Meanings to Measure Change

The meanings of leadership collected in this study might be used in future studies that examine the meaning's role and efficacy in supporting future leadership change messages. For example, research might include a study investigating current and future communication campaign opportunities in the company and the effectiveness of integrating the stream metaphor (or another metaphor) meanings into its rhetoric. Methods might include conducting shared-meaning activities, making observations, and collecting baseline data to measure rhetoric change before and after the activities.

Using Data to Support Change Efforts

Future studies could use the data-collection techniques to collect data and use it as one data point for supporting future LSOC initiatives. The data could be used to conduct an in-depth analysis, looking for meaning implications and cultural references for designing LSOC interventions. The study could extend to partnering with OD design activities and integrate the data points within the OD intervention designs. Furthermore, the designs could be put in place and tied back to the change messages of the intervention and LSOC initiative. For example, if OD practitioners are getting ready to support a merger, what shared meaning can be collected and what metaphor may be used to support the change effort?

Testing Managers' Subsequent Use of the Metaphor

Another recommended research project is to test whether managers use the stream metaphor or other metaphors back on the job to help explain organizational change after the classroom activities. The following are sample research questions that might be asked:

1. How did the use, integration, and change efforts build upon the metaphors used in the training?
2. What challenges did participants come across with the use of the extended metaphors?
3. How might these challenges be met or resolved?
4. What implications are there for future use of the metaphor?

Applying the Methodology to Other Innovations

Other researchers might want to conduct this study with other innovations. For example, the innovation used within this study was leadership, but future studies could be conducted with different innovations, such as quality, customer service, or company values. Innovations such as these are just as abstract as leadership, which is why they, too, would make good topics for use in future research studies.

Examining the Efficacy of Various Metaphors

Based on a review of literature, researchers might use metaphors for organizational use (see Chapter 2) and apply it where appropriate in an organization.

Such research might involve surveying an organization's upcoming LSOC or communication initiatives and then applying the appropriate metaphor to the organization's communication rhetoric. The study would then involve meaning-making activities, as conducted in this study, to provide baseline data. The purpose of such a study would be to measure how well the metaphor worked by comparing communication and rhetoric before and after the innovation activity. With enough such studies, comparisons of the efficacy of various metaphors could be made, perhaps answering the question of whether traditional, literature-based metaphors work better than made-up ones.

Examining Whether Cultural Change Is the Result

Another proposed area of investigation is to study how shared-meaning-making activities help produce cultural change. Such studies might focus on how such activities influence or support cultural change within the organization and might be one facet of a larger culture study. As stated in Chapter 1, most cultural studies use surveys as data collection instruments, such as the study by Helms and Stern (2001), in which the data were collected by a questionnaire in order to assess the organizational culture. The questionnaire contained 42 statements that could be used to assess the norms of behavior within an organization. As Berger (2000) states, a disadvantage of questionnaires is that people may misinterpret the questions, and survey questions are difficult to write. As a result, the questionnaires and semistructured interviews used to collect data in the studies mentioned rely heavily on

the participant's ability to articulate. This is a potential limitation in that participants may struggle to verbally explain concepts that are abstract and difficult to articulate (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Also, allowing participants free rein with their explanations allows for a wide variety of perceptions, explanations, examples, and signs to emerge. Therefore, a wide variety of explanations with no guiding framework may provide data that are difficult to manage and analyze, and thus the need for a guiding metaphorical framework to collect data. With these caveats, my recommendation is that metaphoric frameworks be used to augment such traditional methodologies and data collection techniques in order to provide richer, more useful findings.

Aligning Leader Training with LSOC Initiatives

Perhaps one of the most important areas for future applied research is the study of how and the extent to which current leader-training activities within a company are tied to the company's current LSOC initiatives. The goal of such research would be to tie the alignment back to and reinforce the LSOC desired. Studies might involve conducting shared-meaning activities for each of the initiatives and collecting the data to determine behavior change before and after training. This level of assessment within the organization with the same people, across the organization, and in different divisions (if applicable) could be conducted to see whether or not the meaning has permeated the organization. The following are sample questions that might guide such research:

1. Do the leaders correlate the LSOC behaviors with the reinforcement of the learning activities?

2. How do the learning activities support the behavior change with the LSOC efforts?

3. Are there misalignments from the learned shared-meaning and the LSOC communications?

4. If so, what are the misalignments and how might they be avoided?

Examining the Leaders' Existing Metaphor Use

The next proposed avenue for research is similar to the previous recommendation except that here, the purpose would be to examine leadership's use of metaphors overall, e.g., how leaders use metaphors in the organizations to create or discuss change, and the extent to which those metaphors are actually influencing the desired behavior change, and if not, how leaders might change their messages, rhetoric, and perhaps their metaphors. Other studies might involve preparing leaders with LSOC toolkits and conducting shared-meaning-making activities based on metaphors created by them and then analyzing the meanings the leaders attach to their metaphors, as well as whether what metaphors, and their associated meanings, they think would be most appropriate for their organization. The results of such studies might lead to methods that organizations can use to select metaphors most suited to their particular organization, culture, and business context.

Extending or Refining the Stream Metaphor

Finally, other research might involve examining how the stream metaphor can be extended and built upon to provide leaders with a working metaphor to communicate to their employees the implications of everyday changes. For example, a weather metaphor might be used to articulate what is happening organizationally, for everyone understands the concept of weather and its main elements: weather prediction, forecasting, and preparedness. Meteorologists are paid to look at the weather and its changes and then communicate them on a daily basis. Managers may identify with this metaphor, for they are involved in helping to make sense of what is happening in an organization and what needs to happen to keep the work flowing. For instance, weather changes can be affected by climate changes, which parallel shifting conditions in a company's industry, such as outside competitors and regulatory and market constraints–all of which can change the weather from a sunny day to a stormy one. Also, usually when the weather changes, it affects other things: for example, bodies of water may rise, causing currents to shift and waters to become choppy. If the weather is going to change, then managers must prepare their employees for those changes, which leads to perhaps the most important question of all: Are managers and leaders prepared to do so?

Summary

This chapter has summarized the findings reported in Chapter 4 of how metaphor can be used in the meaning-making activity for future research studies, such

as the one described in this study. Conclusions were provided about the differences found between the middle-managers' (Group A) and the other participants' (Group B) concepts of their organization and its leadership, as well as some speculations about the reasons for these differences. This chapter also provided the conclusions for the efficacy of using metaphor-based activities in other organizations and guidelines for doing so. This chapter then concluded with some implications that this study may have for both practitioners and researchers, namely (a) HRD and ID and IT professionals involved in similar meaning-making communications during times of LSOC efforts, and (b) other scholars interested in extending research in this area.

If IT and HRD practitioners understand how middle managers and others make meaning of leadership in their organization, then it may inform instructional technologists and HRD practitioners more about the culture. And if IT and HRD practitioners know more about the organizational culture and the shared meaning of leadership perceptions and their relevance within the culture, they may be able to reshape behaviors through other training and organizational interventions and beyond.

Meaning of This Study and My Role in the Process

Now that this study is complete, my interest in the relationship between my field and organizational change, culture, semiotics, implementation, and shared meaning has become more significant. In my current position at HealthCare, I have identified the opportunity for ID, IT, and HRD professionals to leverage existing training programs designed to discover the participants' understanding of their

organizational culture and its leadership. I have confirmed my speculation in Chapter 1 that ID, IT, and HRD professionals have the opportunities to use metaphor effectively, as the meanings created can play a more crucial, proactive role in helping managerial and nonmanagerial personnel come to an awareness of how they view their organization and their roles within it.

As mentioned throughout this study, the aim of this research project was not to assess the organizational culture, propose change initiatives, or intervene in the training sessions in any way. Rather, it was to examine the efficacy of using metaphor in instructional training sessions as a way of revealing the participants' perceptions of the organization and its leadership. These metaphors used in the HealthCare training program proved useful for ID, IT, and HRD professionals to leverage and learn from, as they shed light on concepts that may not be obvious or easily articulated. These meanings, as they currently exist and continue to emerge at HealthCare, provided meaningful data points beyond HealthCare's current organizational surveys and questionnaires. Also, the efficacy of using metaphor in instructional training sessions as a way of revealing the participants' perceptions proved to be an insightful one, which invites practitioners by the current learning and development organization to conduct more data analysis

The next steps for HealthCare include the sharing of this study along with implications for leveraging the outcomes as well as using the opportunities presented in this chapter in future LSOC projects. For example, one such future project includes a large-scale organizational change initiative to induct and orient the HealthCare

organization to newly defined corporate values. Early discussions about communication, adoption, implementation, and behavior change are being drafted. One approach includes a metaphorical presentation that described the value concepts and terms, along with learning opportunities to discuss and articulate their meanings. The outcomes of this study can help the planning team in their efforts to implement an effective values-branding campaign. Also, these values can soon be integrated into HealthCare's key learning and development programs, including the New Leader Program.

Extending the Research Literature in IT

Extending the research literature in IT can be done, as demonstrated in this study, and the following is strong analytic advice for the reasons and approaches. As this is my research agenda, I and other scholars can effectively use the method in this study to explore research areas in IT. This study demonstrates why my theoretical premise and methods are valid and can be used for other HRD studies as well.

Gaining insight into unconscious meanings is difficult, but it can be done through studying metaphors and visual symbols used within the organization, much like the spontaneous drawings and their analysis in this study. As revealed, metaphors in organizational settings evoke a readily available number of words and images common enough to set a framework for what people otherwise try to express in an abstract way. The opportunity to capture similar data is not limited to just organizations, but the method and the streaming metaphor activity lends itself to

studies in other various settings, such as school systems, community, higher education, and political systems.

Metaphor use can influence change because metaphors evoke higher-order feelings of mutual understanding and meaning within the organization, and this mutual understanding leads more easily and directly to organizational transformation (Illes & Ritchie, 1999). This research method and streaming metaphor looks at how the research helps create a sound basis for creating and implementing change initiatives by using metaphorical meaning-making activities. Other areas for research can adopt different metaphors to suggest, supplant, or create shared meaning for strategic change initiatives. Design activities, such as the streaming metaphor, can serve as a method and approach for other research studies. If other metaphors such as the streaming metaphor are used, scholars may discover new metaphors so that organizational practitioners are able to see into the organization to gather data and develop insights about organizational phenomena and culture.

It has already been stated that there is a lack of empirical research supporting the in-depth look at metaphors and organizational behavior (Grant & Oswick, 1996) and little research investigating the use of metaphor by leadership (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Little research exists about the meaning-making and sense-making processes within organizations (Morgan, 1998; Schein, 1996; Weick, 1995). Thus, by applying methods used in this study, the same or similar streaming activities, data collection and analysis can be conducted for other IT research studies. Because images and metaphors are central to shaping the development of organizational studies (Morgan,

1998), and few studies have examined how a given metaphor can be used to reveal organizational members' perceptions of and attitudes toward the organization, this study provides both the theoretical and methodological emphasis to conduct future studies in IT involving sense-making and meaning-making learning activities.

Personal Views on IT and Design

My role in this process included much discovery and reflection, not only for my role at HealthCare but also for my role as a training manager supporting LSOC efforts. I sought to extend understanding of the efficacy of metaphors in the classroom and looked into how I and other practitioners in my field might leverage the outcomes of the activity. Although such an inductive or discovery approach to training is not new, the information and data gleaned from such training is often not used to lay the groundwork necessary for shaping an organization's LSOC initiatives, nor is that data used to frame, create, and sustain communications within the organization (Arnold, 1996). I believe that ID, IT, and HRD practitioners are presented with unique opportunities to look more closely at the programs they design and to link to the concepts and images derived through training sessions and LSOC efforts. Without this link, organizations may continue to create mixed messages and confusion about leadership's direction and the organization's goals.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CORRESPONDENCE

[redacted]

[redacted]

August 4, 2005

[redacted]

To Whom It May Concern:

I am an [redacted] employee who is currently enrolled in Northern Illinois University's Doctoral of Education Program for Instructional Technology. As a part of my degree completion I am required to conduct an academic research study. The topic I have chosen to study is called "Determining shared meaning of an innovation during the Innovation-Decision Process."

The data that will support my research question is found in an activity on Day Three of the [redacted] New Leader Program.

I have received my University's approval for the research study. I have contacted and gained support from [redacted] in Corporate Training services to conduct my study with employees in the [redacted] New Leader Program. I have signed and filled my confidentiality agreements with [redacted] Staffing and have completed the [redacted] Agreement Request Form with [redacted] in Global Licensing.

Please confirm whether or not I have met the permissions required to collect data for my study at [redacted]

[redacted]

Sincerely,

Susan Dodt
Manager, Instructional Design
[redacted] Training and Organization Development

[redacted]

APPENDIX B

GROUP A CONSENT MEMO

August 29th, 2005

Dear Colleague,

My name is Susan Dodt, and I am a manager of training. I am also pursuing my degree at Northern Illinois University. For completion of my degree I am required to conduct an academic research study. The site in which I have chosen for my study and that will yield valuable data is part of the New Leader Program, in which you have enrolled.

I am contacting you as a participant in an upcoming class that I will be observing so that I may obtain your consent to be included in my study. On Day 3 of the New Leader Program, I will be present to observe the class participation in a 30-minute classroom activity. My data-collection process involves note taking, and I will be using an audio-voice recorder to assist with the note-taking and data collection. I have obtained all approvals from Security, Human Resources, Legal, and the New Leader Program owners to conduct this study. A copy of the study will be shared with you upon your request.

Below you will find additional information about the study and the consent form requesting your signed consent to be observed in the upcoming class.

GROUP A CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the research project titled "Determining Shared Meaning of an Innovation During the Innovation-Decision Process" being conducted by Susan Dodt (graduate student) and Dr. Kenneth Silber (faculty member) at Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the purpose of the study is to establish what we can find out about how people create a shared meaning of an innovation during the innovation-decision process. The researcher will do this by observing one company's employees when they are introduced to an innovation during a training activity.

If we understand how people make sense of the innovation, then it may tell us more about how meaning is shared, what meanings they assign to images, if the images relate to culturally acceptable meanings, and if there are implications of the meanings created for instructional technology professionals designing innovation-related communications. If we know more about how people create shared meaning of an innovation during the innovation-decision process, then we may be able to reshape communications to influence change throughout an organization.

Outcomes of this study may assist management teams with Large Scale Organizational Change (LSOC) communication efforts and provide them with valuable insights about the organizations in which they would like to change.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to do the following:

As an enrolled participant in the New Leader Program, I allow my participation to be observed by the researcher during a 30-minute, flip-chart drawing exercise. The researcher's observation will include note taking. To assist the researcher with note taking, an audio recorder will be present during the activity. All the information the participant provides is strictly confidential. The participant's presentation, dialog, and drawings will be combined with other participant respondents and used for combined analysis, with no individual being identified directly. The participant's presentation will not be linked to participant names. Upon completion of the transcripted audiotapes and data analysis, the audiotapes will be destroyed.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice, and that if I have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Susan Dodt at [phone number] and/or Dr. Kenneth Silber at (815)-753-5727. I understand if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.

I understand that the intended benefits of this study are to investigate how people create shared meaning of an innovation, during the innovation-decision process, in order to reshape communications to influence change throughout an organization. The data collected and the analysis provided will support the objectives of the study, which will assist in the contributions to a larger body of knowledge of organizational development, perception, communication, and semiotic theories.

I have been informed that there are no foreseeable risks from the observation that I could experience during this study. I understand that all information gathered during this study will be kept confidential by the researcher.

I understand that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I might have as a result of my participation, and I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature indicating consent to participate in the study
Signature _____ Date _____

Signature indicating consent for audiotaped recording of participant in the study
Signature _____ Date _____

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Susan Dodt
Instructional Technology Doctoral Student
Educational Technology Research and Assessment
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, IL 60115
[e-mail addresses]

Kenneth H. Silber, Ph.D.
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[e-mail address]
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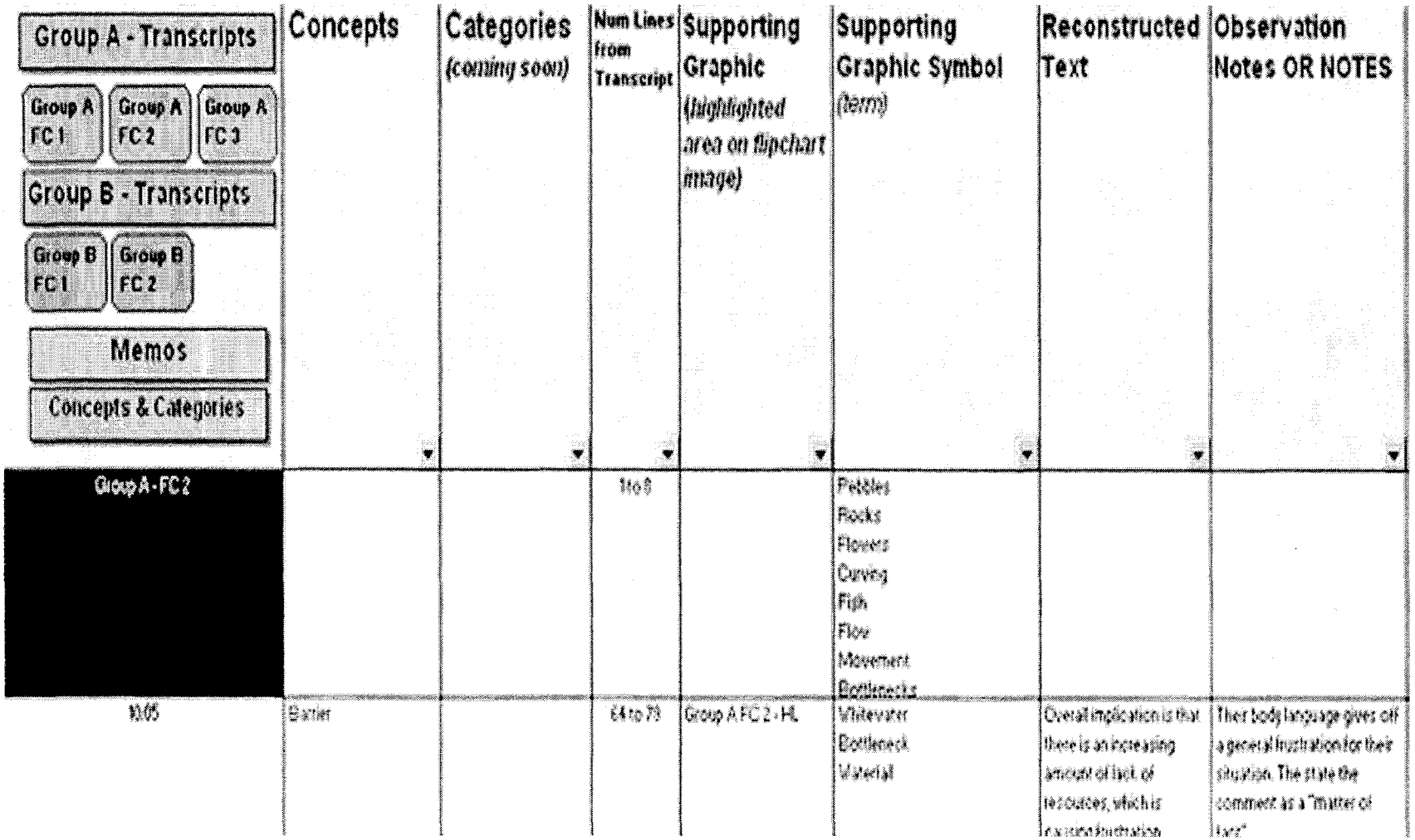
fax - 815-753-9388
cell – [phone number]

Please be sure to return this consent letter via the ORANGE SHUTTLE office mail by September 20, 2005.

APPENDIX C

SPREADSHEET



APPENDIX D

GROUP B CONSENT MEMO

September 29th, 2005

Dear Colleague,

My name is Susan Dodt and I am a manager of training. I am also pursuing my degree at Northern Illinois University. For completion of my degree, I am required to conduct an academic research study. The site in which I have chosen to support my study is our company. The activity to support my study is part of the New Leader Program at Corporate. You have been selected to participate in a select activity that will yield valuable data that will support my study.

I am contacting you to participate in the upcoming activity taken from the New Leader Program at Corporate. As a researcher, I will be observing this activity and need to obtain your consent to be included in my study. Your voluntary participation will require you to participate in a small group activity lasting about 30 minutes. My data collection process involves note taking, and I will be using an audio-voice recorder to assist with the note-taking data collection. I have obtained all approvals from Security, Human Resources, Legal, and the New Leader Program owners to conduct this study. A copy of the study will be shared with you upon your request.

Below you will find additional information about the study and the consent form requesting your signed consent to be observed in the upcoming class.

GROUP B CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the research project titled "Determining Shared Meaning of an Innovation During the Innovation-Decision Process" being conducted by Susan Dodt (graduate student) and Dr. Kenneth Silber (faculty member) at Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the purpose of the study is to establish what we can find out about how people create a shared meaning of an innovation during the innovation-decision process. The researcher will do this by observing one company's employees when they are introduced to an innovation during an activity.

If we understand how people make sense of the innovation, then it may tell us more about how meaning is shared, what meanings they assign to images, if the images relate to culturally acceptable meanings, and if there are implications of the meanings created for instructional technology professionals designing innovation-related communications. If we know more about how people create shared meaning of an innovation during the innovation-decision process, then we may be able to reshape communications to influence change throughout an organization.

Outcomes of this study may assist management teams with Large Scale Organizational Change (LSOC) Communication efforts and provide them with valuable insights about the organizations in which they would like to change.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to do the following:

As a participant in this activity, I allow my participation to be observed by the researcher during a 30-minute, flip-chart drawing exercise. The researcher's observation will include note taking. To assist the researcher with note taking, an audio recorder will be present during the activity. All the information the participant provides is strictly confidential. The participant's presentation, dialog, and drawings will be combined with other participant respondents and used for combined analysis, with no individual being identified directly. The participant's presentation will not be linked to participant names. Upon completion of the transcripted audiotapes and data analysis, the audiotapes will be destroyed.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice and that if I have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Susan Dodt at [phone number] and/or Dr. Kenneth Silber at (815)-753-5727. I understand if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.

I understand that the intended benefits of this study are to investigate how people create shared meaning of an innovation, during the innovation-decision process, in order to reshape communications to influence change throughout an organization. The data collected and the analysis provided will support the objectives the study, which will assist in the contributions to a larger body of knowledge of organizational development, perception, communication, and semiotic theories.

I have been informed that there are no foreseeable risks from the observation that I could experience during this study. I understand that all information gathered during this study will be kept confidential by the researcher.

I understand that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I might have as a result of my participation, and I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature indicating consent to participate in the study
Signature _____ Date _____

Signature indicating consent for audio taped recording of participant in the study

Signature _____ Date _____

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Susan Dodt
Instructional Technology Doctoral Student
Educational Technology Research and Assessment
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, IL 60115
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fax - 815-753-9388
cell – [phone number]

Please be sure to return this consent form via the ORANGE SHUTTLE office mail by October 15, 2005.